ZZAP! 64

A ZZAPBACK PUBLICATION
The DEF Tribute to ZZAP!64

Free with Retro Gamer

MONTHLY REVIEW FOR COMMODORE SOFT WARE

GRABBED BY THE TRUE SPIRIT OF ZZAP!

Roger Kean, Gary Penn, Chris Anderson, Steve Jarratt, Gary Liddon, Gordon Houghton and many other shiny, zzappy people look back...

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Inside the mind of Jon Hare

OLIVER FREY

Rare artwork exposed

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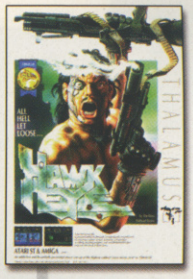

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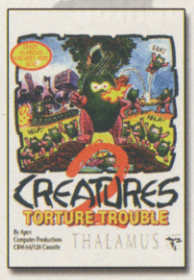

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KEN D. FISH presents:

THE ZZAP! BACK TEAM

Name: Rob de Voogd (Mr. Zzapback) **Age:** 33

Job: Marketeer, graphic designer

First Zzap!64: Issue 17 (September 1986)

The brains behind this DEF tribute (brainless after).

Games: Wizball, Head over Heels, Rocketball, Dan Dare, Matchday II, Bounces, Epyx Games series

Website: www.zzapback.com

Name: Iain Black **Age:** 29

Study: Masters in Networks and Distributed Systems

First Zzap!64: Issue 41 (September 1988)

See page 36 for a full interview.

Games: Wizball, Dropzone, Powerdrift, Last Ninja 2

Website: Webmaster of www.zzap64.co.uk

Name: Stephen Stuttard (Mort) **Age:** 34

Job: Minion at British Telecom

First Zzap!64: Issue 2 (June 1985)

See page 42 for a full interview.

Games: Action Biker, Wizball, Uridium, Mercenary

Website: Scan King and mod at www.zzap64.co.uk.

Name: Fabrizio Gennari (Fab) **Age:** 31

Job: Software engineer (read: slave) for Motorola

First Zzap!64: Italian: June 1988; UK: July 1988

Fab likes computing, and that means he uses computers even when he's not at work. Therefore he doesn't have a real life because he's always in front of a PC. He's an Italian with a wacky sense of humour, and is the result of Newsfield's imperial tactics back in the 1980s.

Games: Tetris, Impossible Mission, Wizball, Last Ninja

Website: Use Google – his URL is a bit… lengthy!

Name: Lee Bolton (peeknpoke Lee) **Age:** 33

Job: Archive supervisor for a data company

First Zzap!64: Issue 1 (May 1985)

Lee has been a fan of computer and video games for many years. His growing family are constantly awed by Lee's ever-growing gaming collection, which includes three full-size arcade machines in the back room, complete with bar and drinks on tap.

Games: Guardian, Rambo, Way of the Exploding Fist, Paradroid, H.E.R.O., Wizball, Pac-Land, Ancipital

Website: peeknpoke.emuunlim.com

Name: Paul Morrison (Paul Emoz) **Age:** 33

Job: Stay-at-home dad

First Zzap!64: Issue 7 (November 1985)

Living in the USA, but back this summer to annoy the Brits, Paul occupies much of his time writing for online magazine Way of the Rodent. He's now living his dream, writing for the mother of all games mags! (That's this one! – Ed.)

Games: Paradroid, Impossible Mission, Dropzone, The Bard's Tale, World Class Leaderboard

Website: www.geocities.com/paulemoz2

Name: Lee Theasby (LeeT) **Age:** 33

Job: Part-time DJ in a club

First Zzap!64: Issue 2 (June 1985)

Howdy! Here's Lee from Hartlepool, involved with this issue of Zzap! because he's always been a fan of the magazine, so he just had to be a part of it! This is his 15 minutes of Zzap! fame!

Games: Bubble Bobble, Action Biker, Great Giana Sisters, Nebulus, Willow Pattern

Website: Mod at the Lemon64 and zzap64.co.uk boards.

Name: Andrew Fisher (Merman) **Age:** 30

Job: Freelance writer

First Zzap!64: Issue 18 (October 1986)

His name may not be a familiar name to Zzap!64 and Commodore Force readers, but Professor Brian Strain will be. He wrote CF's technical column for sixteen issues. Now he writes for Retro Gamer.

Games: Wizball, The Sentinel, Paradroid, Buggy Boy

Website: www.geocities.com/andrewrfisher

Name: Mat Allen (Mayhem) **Age:** 30

Job: Application Support for Compaq

First Zzap!64: Issue 19 (November 1986)

Mayhem is a retro connoisseur extraordinaire. He peruses the retro community for those in need of assistance. It is for this reason that he's providing a portion of his knowledge to this Zzap!64 project. He got assimilated into the cult of Zzap!64 with issue 19, and not only does he own every issue, but they are all nicely stored in binders, too.

Games: Dropzone, The Sentinel, Mayhem in Monsterland, Impossible Mission, IK+

Website: www.mayhem64.co.uk

Name: Anthony Stiller (Ant) **Age:** 34

Job: Contracting in the IT industry

First Zzap!64: Issue 1 (May 1985)

Our art supremo, a.k.a Mr. Mugshot! He drew all the superb reviewer heads for Zzap!64 issue 107 as well as for this DEF tribute. He's another one of those weirdos who still holds a soft spot for the most amazing home computer ever made.

Games: Elite, Impossible Mission, PSI-5 Trading Company, Hunter's Moon, Matrix II

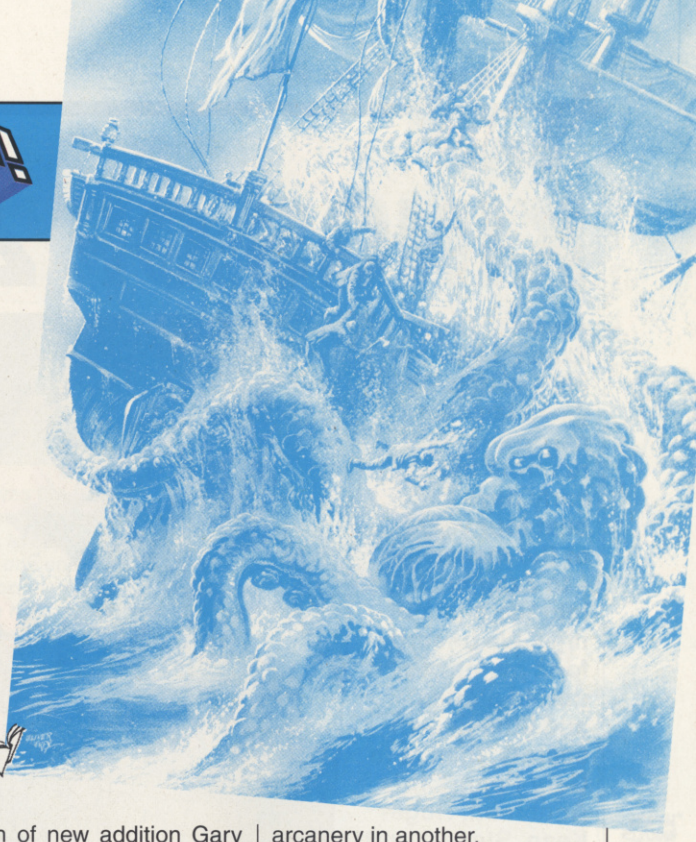
Introducing the DEF Tribute to... ZZAP!64

When the Spectrum computer magazine Crash became a sales success in the second half of 1984, it seemed a logical next step to launch a similar title for owners of the Commodore 64.

It was also logical to name our second title Bang, leaving Wallop for a third. The irreverent attitude of Crash appealed to many suitable editors, not least Chris Anderson, then editing VNU's glossy PCG (Personal Computer Games). He was selected, given a budget, and set about recruiting a new editorial team. Crash used local schoolboys as reviewers, Chris wanted more control, and picked a team of three: Bob Wade, Gary Penn and Julian Rignall, all youngsters barely out of school. He also hated the notion of editing a mag called Bang, and so Zzap!64 was born.

Editorial operated out of offices in Yeovil, Chris's home, but in Ludlow, the art department was expanded to handle the new layouts. Chris was also a disciplined editor, unlike the near anarchy that reigned in Ludlow, and inevitably there were clashes between him and us. After three issues, Chris departed to set up his own publishing company, Future, and the rest, as they say, became history.

Nevermind; Bob went with Chris, Gary and Julian moved up to Ludlow, and I switched from editing Crash to Zzap!64. With an excess of brash enthusiasm, a fluent stream of creative obscenity and an affinity for the anarchy of the Crash team, it could have been a disaster. But Gary and Julian had a core of journalistic ability and a determination to create the best games magazine around. Between their growing skills, my guiding hand (they often thought I was going over the top, mind) and the weird imagination of new addition Gary Liddon, we did succeed.



There never had been a magazine like Zzap!64 and I don't think there ever has been since. It's hard to explain what being a part of it was like – surreal almost. There we were, sitting in cramped offices above Victoria Wine in little old sleepy Ludlow, knocking out pages against furious deadlines on Apricot computers, while visiting readers sat in one corner competing against the Scorelord, and luminaries of the world's programming elite discussed code arcanery in another.

In its life, Zzap!64 had several editors and a succession of staff writers, but it was the vision and efforts of Gary Penn and Julian Rignall that gave the magazine an impetus it never quite lost, even in the darker late days.

If there never had been a Commodore 64, someone would have had to invent one to justify the essential existence of Zzap!64. I'm quite convinced the world would have been a much sadder place without it.

Roger Kean

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"Twenty years? No. Way."

When I emailed Gary Penn to announce this DEF Tribute to Zzap!64, reminding him that Zzap!64 arrived with a bang 20 years ago, his response was: "Twenty years? No. Way." Well, indeed: time sure flies!

When I got my hands on my first Zzap!64 (issue 17, September 1986, just after getting my C128), I was 14 years old. I never thought I'd be able to get my hands on all sixteen back issues, let alone be able, almost 20 years later, to communicate with the guys who ran the best computer games magazine ever.

Zzap!64 was so different. While most British games mags were head and shoulders above the Dutch ones, Zzap!64 was by far the best choice any self-respecting C64-loving teenager could make: the cover, the reviews by three blokes, loads of screenshots, the Challenge, the Scorelord, the Shadow – the list of ace stuff is almost endless.

No other magazine captured the same spirit and enthusiasm that Zzap! did. In fact, I've not seen the likes of Zzap! since. Although magazines such as Super Play and, to some extent, Arcade came pretty close, we are still waiting for a magazine with the same raw energy Zzap! had in its first four years.

While smart people nowadays are able to cram a complete C64 into a joystick, I ask myself (and the publishing industry) why it isn't possible to cram all the best features of Zzap!64 – and more – into a nifty, modern games magazine.

After 20 years, it's about time for this to happen.

Rob de Voogd

KINGS OF ZZAP! TOWERS

April 11, 1985: Zzap!64 saw the light of day. 20 years later we asked key figures from those early days – the best four years of the magazine – to Zzap!back into the mists of time. We unearth fond memories, untold stories and little-known secrets, thanks to Gary Penn, Chris Anderson, Roger Kean, Steve Jarratt, Paul Sumner a.k.a. Dominic Handy, Gary Liddon and Gordon Houghton.

The Zzap!64 reviewing team back in 1986. From left to right: Sean Masterson, Gary Penn, Gary Liddon, 'Paul Sumner' (Dominic Handy), Julian Rignall; and at the front: Jeff Minter, still scratching behind his ear because of that Mama Llama review?

Gary Penn

You look at all the other magazines around at the time (not so easy from 20 years away) and it's easy to see that Zzap!64 was like nothing else. Even Crash was a little... staid by comparison.

Zzap!64 had not one, not two but three highly visible reviewers for every game to provide (in theory at least) a balanced spread of opinion, reviewers who could play games and had played a great many games, reviewers with a controlled obsession with games, reviewers in cartoon form (I can't remember why photographs weren't used – it must have been a style thing – but I do remember we were all so vain and unhappy with the way Oli made us look).

Zzap!64 had reviews of two, three or four pages in length. It had a detailed ratings system (Chris loved his ratings systems – ACE's Predicted Interest Curve and ratings out of a thousand were his, I think). Zzap!64 reviewed pretty much every new game released in a month, which usually took time – we'd work most nights and every weekend. There was little difference between work and play.

No other magazine has ever come close to capturing that raw fanzine scent, despite skimming the surface – they just can't fake the substance. Not that Zzap!64 was flawless.

"Zzap!64 pleased so many people and pissed off so many others"

The quality of writing wasn't great but it was usually earnest. Zzap!64 struck such a resonant chord with its readers because it was made by people who cared. Actually, to be honest, all the other magazines were so bad that Zzap!64 was best anyway by default.

Zzap!64 worked because it gave the impression that anyone could do it. All the other magazines were full of the same dreary pretensions as Commodore: bollocks about what the C64 was for, like home accounts, like anyone ever used

"Secret negotiations had been taking place with Chris Anderson, Editor of publisher VNU's Personal Computer Games, and at the start of February (1985) they came to fruition: he joined Newsfield to edit a new magazine for the Commodore 64 to be called Sprite & Sound."
The Crash history

it for anything else (apart from props in films like Police Academy 3). All the other magazines were full of the same dreary writers who didn't care about the medium or the games or the readers – they only cared about their careers. They all seemed to be embarrassed by the business, considering it a stepping stone to supposedly greater things while we were treating it with all the reverence of established media such as music and cinema.

Zzap!64 was more interested in the authors not the publishers, unlike the other magazines. Zzap!64 pleased so many people and pissed off so many others. Retailers used Zzap!64 as a guide to what to stock, which made publishers extra precious about their product. A few percent here and there made all the difference. Zzap!64 was undoubtedly responsible for making and breaking dozens of titles.

Those first few issues were very scrappy. Chris had some quite special ideas but his style was a little too... jolly hockey sticks. I'm not surprised he went on to greater things though. He had such conviction and drive. Things settled into a groove by about issue 7. Liddon must have provided ballast.

Zzap!64 was as essential and as seminal to the birth of the computer and video games industry in the UK as the likes of NME and Melody Maker were to the music in the 1970s and 1980s. Putting it simply: we ruled!

Gary Penn

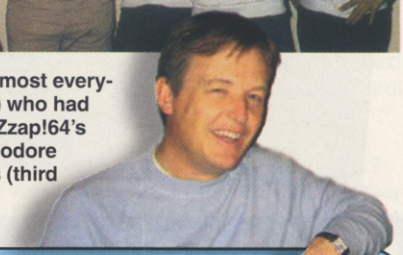
• Happy days (so far) in 1988 for (from left to right) Steve Jarratt, Gordon Houghton, Paul Glancey and then Editor Julian Rignall

Gordon Houghton

Zzap!'s name says it all, really. While its rivals – such as the bland Commodore User and the frightening Commodore Computing International – had titles which suggested the earnest and worthy uses to which a C64 could be put, Zzap!64 was unashamedly fun. You knew from the very first review you read that the people who wrote it were enthusiasts, just as crazy about games as you were: they raved about the classics and threw up over the duds. It was a magazine with guts, too. These days a crap game might get 6/10; Zzap!64 had the courage to give rubbish what it deserved: a humiliating 3%.

The fantasy world of Zzap! Towers emerged at a time when many still regarded the C64 as a useful business machine; by the time the last issue was printed it had become a benchmark of quality, subjective writing. We'll never see its like again for a variety of dull and sad reasons, but it was truly great while it lasted.

Gordon Houghton



• Chris was the first one (almost everybody else followed in 1988) who had the guts to sell his soul to Zzap!64's number one enemy: Commodore User. (boo-hiss!) Here he is (third from the right) in a tacky G-force sweater.

Chris Anderson

A huge amount of dreaming and energy went into Zzap!64. Did you know?

• The home of Zzap!64 was originally Yeovil in Somerset, my home town at the time. The Newsfield directors let me locate it there because that meant they could poach me from one of their rivals... At the time, right before Zzap!64, I was editor of Personal Computer Games.

• I took an early decision not to staff it with journalists (who liked games), but with gamers (who had an aptitude for writing). Julian Rignall and Gary Penn were hired because they had entered awesome reviews in a competition for one of the final issues of PCG. And Bob Wade, also a gamer, came over from PCG.

• We set a goal when we launched Zzap!64 to come up with ten inventions that had never been done in magazines before. They included: the little cartoon faces that showed reactions to games good and bad and truly awful; free games when you subscribed; the crazy ratings system we came up with; and (in our humble opinion) the best tips section that had ever been created up to that point.

• Julian supplemented his meagre pay by cracking the local fruit machines and bringing back gobs of cash every weekend. He also told gleeful stories of how his headmaster had warned him he'd never make a living out of playing games.

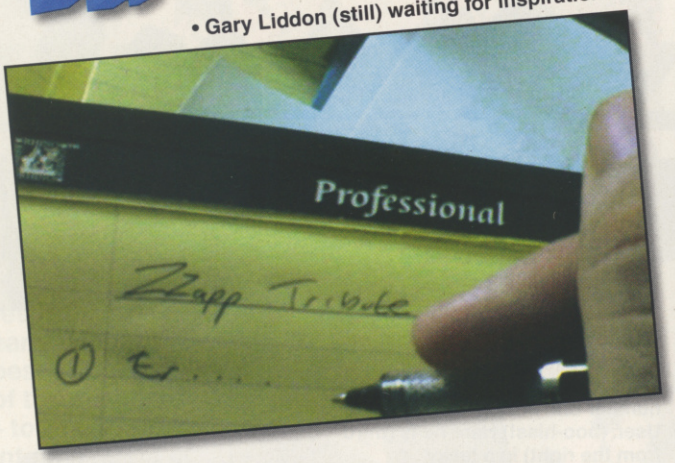
• Unfortunately, when our bosses at Newsfield insisted moving the magazine to Ludlow after just three issues, I objected, and I was fired. This was the best thing that ever happened to me because it spurred me to start Future Publishing, home of the next 50 games mags. So I still have a soft spot for Ollie and Roger, even if (to be continued on page 202).

• Julian later (c.1999) came to work for me at Imagine Media in the US, and helped launch ign.com, which is now the world's leading internet games site, with a monthly audience 250 times bigger than Zzap!'s. But none of us will forget the mag that kind of started it all...

Chris Anderson

"Zzap! . . . ? Well, no-one really liked Sprite & Sound. Newsfield was expected to come up with something as sharp-sounding and short as Crash, so in the end we settled on Zzap!, adding the 64 as an afterthought. But as events were soon to prove there was nothing 'afterthought' about Zzap!"
The Crash history

• Gary Liddon (still) waiting for inspiration...



Quotes

Rob Hubbard
"I do recall visiting their office – it was a real mess. I don't know how they ever managed to get anything done or make their deadlines. Zzap!64 was very good for me during those early days and definitely helped my career get started."

Oliver Frey
"Once editorial had made a decision on what topic or game warranted the front-page position, it was up to me to visualize it in an eye-grabbing, magazine-selling way. This meant creating three covers (Crash, Zzap!64 and Amtix) plus ancillary editorial illustrations each month; add sundry giveaway posters and you had a full work schedule. In the first year of Crash I also drew four colour pages of comic strip each month: anyone remember The Terminal Man?

Staffing was also a problem. The local schoolboy reviewers were plentiful, and pretty good too, but as we grew we needed more professional staff in every area, and frankly none of us was prepared for the task of management. But I think the inevitable tensions combined with the level of freedom editorial and design enjoyed created some of the best magazines of their kind."

Gary Penn
"Oliver Frey was invaluable, incredible. Most of his illustration work was off the cuff. He'd just do it. There were always awkward spaces to fill and he'd knock up suitable imagery in minutes."

Roger Kean
"If ever we doubted what we were talking about, Oliver Frey's magnificent covers painted the reality for us – one day, we knew, the graphics would really look like this."

Steve Jarratt
"It was great being on one of only two serious C64 mags – especially when the other one was rubbish!"

Julian Rignall
"They were the golden days when you could get away with paying teenagers a pittance to slave away for 12 hours a day in a dark, smoky sweatshop. Actually, it was a load of fun."

Steve Jarratt

The 10 best things about working on Zzap!64

1) Getting to play games all day and then write about them. Just about the best job a videogame-mad bloke can get!

2) Getting to meet and work with Gary Penn and Julian Rignall. Egotistical primadonnas, the pair of 'em, but great gamers and couple of really talented fellas. (Not to mention all the other lovely folks at Newsfield.)

3) Going on press trips: I've flown a light aircraft, driven a hovercraft, been in a helicopter and smashed up a Formula Ford racing car.

4) Working in a chaotic office, filled with C64 games from floor to ceiling, surrounded by computers, monitors, broken joypads and way too many random cables.

5) Being among the first people outside of Russia to play Tetris, when Mirrorsoft brought in their new puzzle game.

6) Being on the market-leading mag at the peak of the C64's power. We were kings of the videogame market, and everyone came up to Ludlow to see us. Which was nice.

7) Playing some of the best, most creative games ever created. And all before the general public!

8) Meeting some of the best C64 programmers: Stavros Fasoulas, Andrew Braybrook, Martin Walker and the Sensible boys, Jops and Chrix.

9) Signing autographs at the annual games show in London, and even attracting the occasional young lady fan/stalker…

10) Working on Zzap!64 gave me the opportunity to edit Crash, and then move to Future Publishing where I worked on ACE, and launched Edge, the Official PlayStation magazine, and T3 among others.

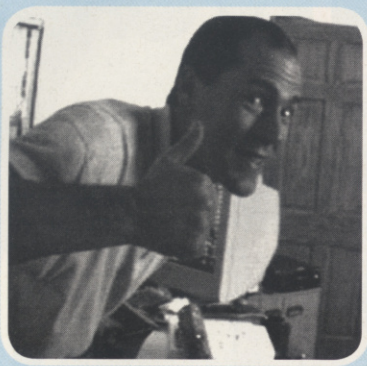
Thanks, Zzap!64! Long may you live on!

Steve Jarratt

Julian Rignall
"My absolute fondest memories are just playing games morning, noon and night and writing about them. As a hardcore gamer it was a dream come true." <<

• Young boys who made a difference: Gaz and Jaz representing Zzap!64 and Newsfield at the 6th Commodore Show back in 1985

Dominic Handy a.k.a. Paul Sumner



In issue 4 (August 1985) of Zzap!64, a new reviewer was announced by the name of Paul Sumner. The 19-year-old from 'Much Wenlock' in Shropshire had taken part in that month's Zzap! Challenge. Paul was known as hating Pot Noodles (the staple Rignall diet), and liking Abba and the Osmonds. Paul's face soon became familiar as he was an ever-present member of the reviewing team, and remained so until issue 40. He always came across as a non-biased reviewer and always seemed to 'sit on the fence' where decisions were concerned.

In fact, it turns out that Paul Sumner never existed and was simply a figment of Jaz Rignall and Gary Penn's imagination. With Bob Wade and Chris Anderson leaving suddenly after issue 3, there was a gap in the reviewing staff. Gary and Jaz wrote most of the reviews between them, but invented a new reviewer so the Zzap!64 readers would appear to get an extra opinion on games. The face behind Paul Sumner was none other than Dominic Handy - who was working on Speccy magazine Crash at the time.

Marc Macrae (in 2000) and Matthew Wilson of www.crashonline.org.uk (in 2005) tracked Dominic down and asked him a couple of questions about the innuendo. They got some quite entertaining answers and insights...

Dominic, how did you get involved at Newsfield?
I was definitely hanging around Crash Towers soon after the first issue appeared, as I lived in Ludlow and used to get my Speccy games from Newsfield. After a few months of me being in awe of the reviewers who I would occasionally catch a glimpse of, the Art Director asked me if he could take my photo wearing the famous Crash T-shirt.I didn't know what to say, and he soon had me pulling a stupid pose in front of the church door behind the offices. I even got to keep the T-shirt! I can't find the picture in any of my issues, but I do have the original print of me looking like a dork.

When I popped in to buy another game a couple of days later, Roger Kean just asked me what I thought about a game (I can't remember which one!), during which he was furiously tapping my comments into the computer. I guess that was my first review, and I didn't even realise it. All the reviews were anonymous to start with, and they used to pay me £2 for each comment (the bit at the end), or £5 for a review (the main bit at the beginning). As you can imagine, that was big bucks for a 15-year-old just raising cash for games. (And they knew that I'd just go and spend the money in the mail order department anyway!)

Who came to you with the idea of being a pseudo-reviewer, and why was this necessary?
It was when Zzap!64 moved into the Towers that things got confusing for me. You see, they wanted a new reviewer, but just a face as Jaz and Gaz would write the reviews themselves. And so Paul Sumner, my alter ego, was born. I didn't do any reviews for Zzap!64, but my face was all over it. I'm even on the cover of Zzap!64 issue 4, and in Crash 44 (page 90) as Paul Sumner. All very confusing as they could never have my face in Crash with my real name next to it! (The masthead of issue 55 has me down as editor and Paul Sumner as a contributor...)

• Paul Sumner's first appearance in Zzap!64, losing the Challenge against Julian Rignall

Did you actually do the Zzap! Challenge, printed in Issue 4?
Yes, but I'd never played Pitstop II before in my life! I remember sitting on the start line, the lights going green and Jazza ramming into the side of me straight away to knacker up my tyres. I might as well have disconnected the joystick for the good it did!

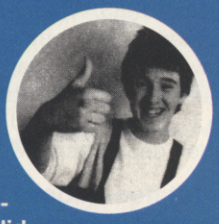
Was anyone else fictional (apart from Lloyd that is)?
Lloyd, fictional? I wondered why the guy never turned up for work! I thought it was just a tax dodge...

I can't remember anyone else who wasn't real. It was confusing enough for me as it was! People like Lloyd and Paul Sumner were just made up because of the lack of good staff in the Ludlow area, and the need to make the mag look bigger than it really was. Ludlow is only a small town in the middle of the countryside and so it was always difficult to get quality writers moving there.

Eventually, they realised that as I was hanging around the offices so much, and raking in tons of cash from writing reviews (I also did a few bits for TechNiche), they might as well give me a full time job! I think it was Graeme Kidd who actually got me reviewing on a regular basis, and Barnaby Page who really taught me how to edit a magazine. Both of 'em good blokes.

Did you work on any other publications after you left Crash and Zzap!64?
Yeah, loads. I worked in some capacity on pretty much every mag that Newsfield produced, from Crash to Fear, Amtix to Movie, and when I left Newsfield, I worked on Raze (although I'd actually left Newsfield at the time and they wouldn't let me have my name in it – a very long story...). I was one of the founder members of Paragon Publishing I helped launch SegaPro and a plethora of other Paragon titles. I'm out of that business now – it's a young man's game! <<

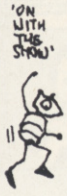
Gary Liddon



"Paul was originally invented to make the reviewing team seem bigger than it actually was, but we kept him around because it was handy getting people outside the core team doing game reviews and using the Paul Sumner pseudonym. It meant Oliver Frey didn't have to draw new heads for comment box outs.

It's actually Dominic Handy who the images are modelled on and he did do some of the Paul Sumner editorial. If you cross reference his reviews it's actually quite obvious as one month Paul Sumner would moan that platform games weren't really his cup of tea and the next month proclaimed that platforms were the ultimate expression of gameplay.

I wrote the Sentinel review after leaving Zzap!64 and while working at Thalamus, and did my comment under the Paul Sumner guise. It was my idea not to score it because it was 'too original'. What a pretentious twat!"



"We are expanding by launching a new title in April (1985), when Zzap!64 is released. I'm surprised by how many letters we receive that say the writer has a Commodore 64 owning friend who is jealous because there isn't a 'Crash for Commodore owners'. Well from April onwards there will be."
Crash Editorial

STREET OF KINGS

What Abbey Road was to the Beatles, 1/2 King Street, in Ludlow's centre, was to Zzap!64. King Street was the place where all the magic happened. From an initial bedroom operation, Newsfield, under ownership of Roger Kean, Oliver Frey and Franco Frey, leased office premises in King Street. These offices turned out to be the scene of Zzap!64's best years. Roger Kean looks back on those hectic days in the centre of Ludlow.

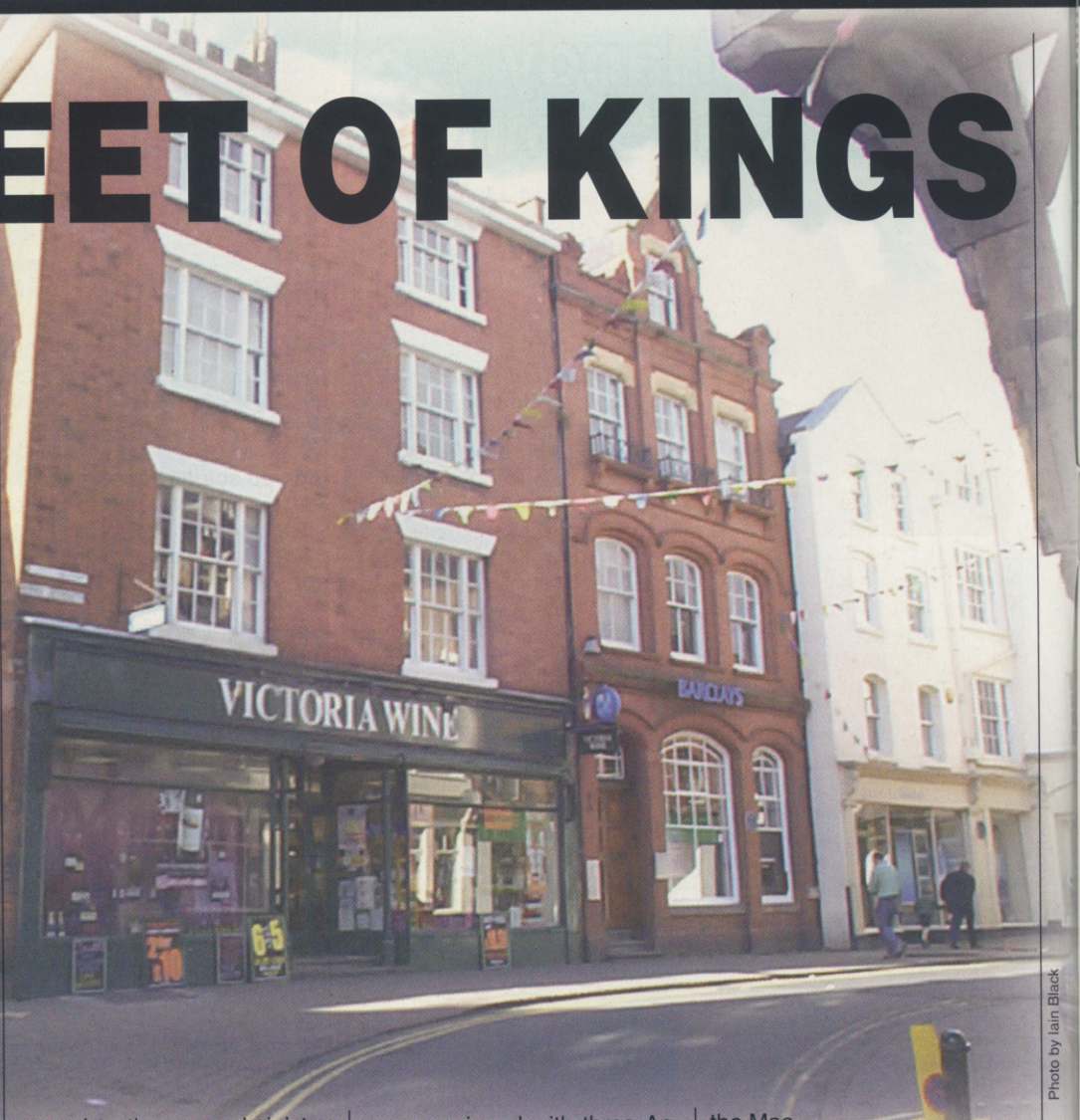


Photo by Iain Black

The King Street premises were on three floors above Victoria Wine (now incorporated into Barclays Bank), with the entrance in a narrow alley leading to St. Lawrence Parish Church.

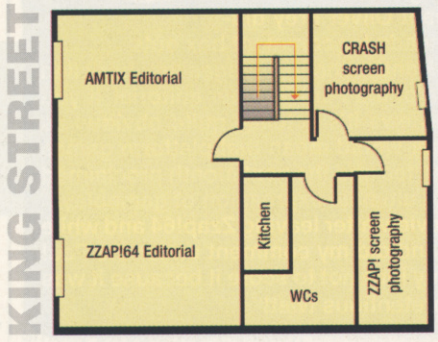
In the years 1984–89, the room arrangements changed around a lot, but the plan on this page shows more or less how things were when Zzap!64 moved up from Yeovil to Ludlow in June 1985. When Amtix was canned, Crash moved back downstairs with Zzap!64. The Film Planning Department (set up in 1986) replaced the mail order department, which had moved to the new administrative offices for Newsfield in nearby Gravel Hill). Similarly, the original Ad Department moved to a third premises about 100 yards away in Broad Street, and its space was taken over by the Production Manager, Jonathan Rignall (Julian's baby brother).

Early in 1987, the room on the second floor that had been Crash editorial, became the fledgling electronic publishing area, equipped with three Apple Macs. We began retraining film planners on the Mac, and in 1988 became the world's first publisher to produce a full-colour magazine, including scanning screen captures of games to film entirely on the Mac, with colour imagesetting.

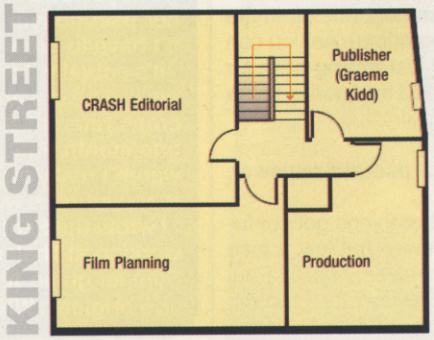
In 1988, the company moved wholesale to newly refurbished offices at Case Mill, a huge water mill, by which time every magazine was produced on the Mac.

Between 1984–86, my desk sat in the far corner from the window in the room marked Amtix Editorial. Thereafter I was at the Gravel Hill offices, initially setting up the electronic publishing system, then later editing LM Magazine (which also had a London office). I only came back to King Street in 1988, to take over The Games Machine and help Oliver Frey launch Fear magazine.

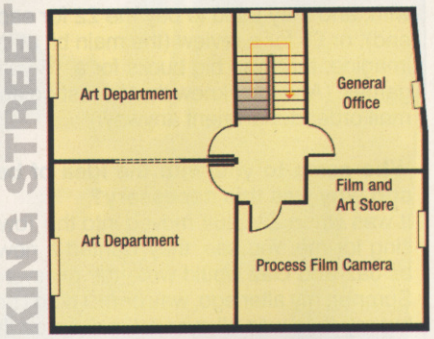
1st floor (above Victoria Wine)



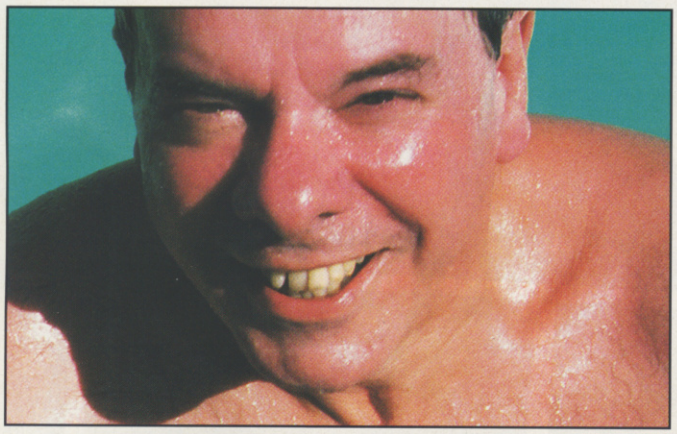
2nd floor



3rd floor



"During 1985, Newsfield's offices in King Street had altered dramatically. What a year earlier had been spacious and under-occupied was now cramped. A situation that was to get worse still, and one we've had to live with since."
History of Crash



• Former Zzap! Editor Roger Kean relaxing in the sun. Well deserved, after spending his best years in front of an Apricot.

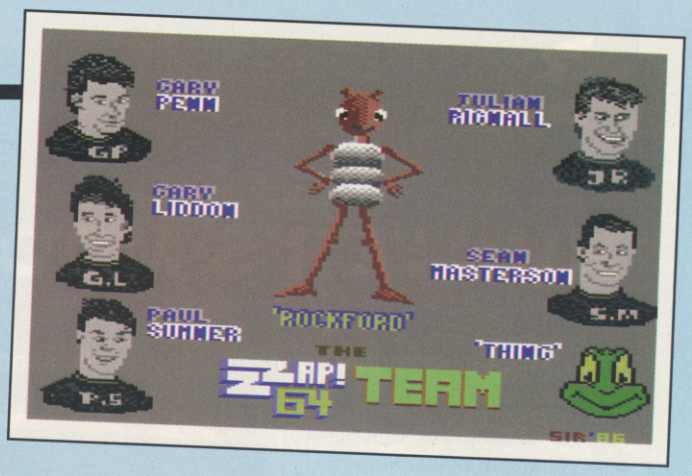
King Street, it has to be said, was a damned noisy place. Fortunately, Zzap!64 had opted for 'professional' reviewers, using the editorial staff of Gary Penn, Julian Rignall and Gary Liddon. After Liddon left – selfishly enough to go and earn a fortune as a games developer – there was a series of staff writers under first Gary Penn and then Julian.

By contrast, Crash continued as it had begun, by using Ludlow schoolboys as multiple reviewers. Soon after 3:30 in term time, the place was crammed with youngsters from 13 up to 18 hammering away at Spectrums and generally rowing over every game. It drove Gary and Julian mad, but it was usually a case of several pots calling several kettles black, since they were barely ever any quieter.

Zzap!64 frequently worked well into the night, especially when we began using what one day would become the Internet to conduct interviews with American games developers. It was common to pass by the office and see lights on after midnight and check it out to find Gary Penn slaving away over a pack of Marlboroughs, trying to type on an Apricot keyboard buried under a ton of papers, or Gary Liddon stretched out, snoring on the floor.

Having edited Crash for well over a year, taking over Zzap!64 was a daunting task, not least for the two enthusiastic young men who had been picked by the magazine's first editor, Chris Anderson. Gary and Julian were extraordinarily fluent in creative obscenity, sometimes able to hold a conversation lasting ten minutes without a single decent word in it apart from the occasional definite or indefinite article. Fortunately, none of this really came out in the pages.

Virtually just out of school, neither had held real jobs before, and yet they came on a pace as capable, often inspired writers and then editors.



ANOTHER TRIBUTE TO ZZAP!64

Stephen Robertson (39), a.k.a. SIR86, was back in the 1980's a freelance artist, drawing pictures for games on the Commodore 64.

In Zzap!64 issue 5, three of his pictures were printed. One year later Stephen drew this Tribute to Zzap!64. (see above) Unfortunately he lost it. Thanks to Compunet and the C64 community this picture surfaced after 19 years, and here it is in all its 8-bit glory. Visit also Stephen's gallery.

• **www.ravenger.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/gallery**

I once noted that Gary had come "from callow Berkhampstead joystick wiggler to assistant editor of the biggest Commodore mag in Britain in only one year - a real rags to riches story, and in the process he's learnt that definite is spelled with an 'i', 'separate' and 'desperate' may sound the same but don't look the same, and lots of other useful things."

By the time we had established the Scorelord contests, I bowed out and left them to it. Partly, that was also to avoid fans ignoring me in favour of wanting to meet Lloyd Mangram (who, as a former Zzap!64 reader recently noticed, retired from the business to set up his own pharmacy in the centre of Ludlow). <<

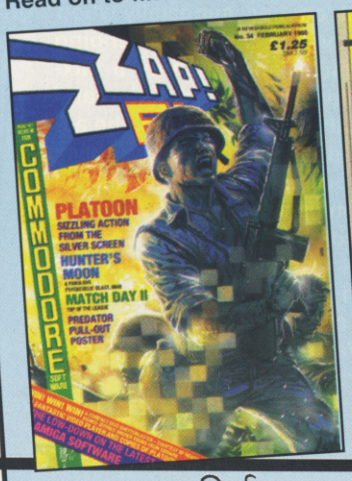
Roger Kean

Waving goodbye to the loyal Zzap!64 following in September 1986

• Ludlow, 1983. Roger Kean, Franco Frey and Oliver Frey try to look into the future. Would they know that 22 years later we'd still be raving about the magazines they created?

ZZAP! BACK HUNTER'S MOON

We're zzapping back to Zzap!64 issue 34, February 1988. We present a restyled Hunter's Moon review; on page 14, the game gets the DEF Zzap!back treatment. Would the game Sizzle today? Read on to find out...



"Crash's editorial masthead had expanded yet again, to credit Gary Penn, Julian Rignall and Gary Liddon as contributing writers. This was at a time when there was an all-hands-to-the-deck feeling about the small staff putting together three magazines.
History of Crash

HUNTER'S MOON

Thalamus, £9,99 cass, £12,99 disk, joystick only

• Martin Walker's highly colourful psychedelic space shoot 'em up

After piloting the starship 'Hunter' too close to a black hole, the player finds himself transported to a different sector of the Galaxy – a strange region filled with cellular hives, inhabited by worker cells and ruled over by shimmering starcells. The only way home is to negotiate the entire alien system and return to the black hole.

Every system is divided into levels, each containing up to three star cells. One flashes when the Hunter enters the level and yields a loopspace co-ordinate if collected within eight seconds. If the player collects four flashing cells within the time limit, he moves onto the next, more complicated system. If the time limit expires before the flashing cells are picked up, every star cell within the system has to be collected before the player progresses.

Surrounding each star cell is a deadly hive, which is blasted to allow Hunter acces the cell. However, the hive is continually monitored and reconstructed by the worker cells who traverse the structures. Worker cells are invincible and cause the ship to explode on contact, and they also release spores which are similarly dangerous. The Hunter has three shields which offer protection from spores, but are only effective for one level.

Between each system is a bonus screen where the player protects the Hunter from attacking cells who shoot spores. An extra shield is awarded on entering loopspace, and succesfully fending off all attackers rewards the player with another ship.

A drop-down menu may be accessed during play, and allows the player to change the engine (there are three, each giving a different control method), alter the colour of the ship and initiate the loopspace trainer, which presents a controllable lightshow of psychedelic Colourspace-style patterns.

I'm always a sucker for shoot 'em ups, especially when they're as good-looking, innovative and as challenging as this. The gameplay is unusual, and requires a mixture of quick reflexes, lateral thinking, co-ordination and shooting to survive. Although the going is tough, the action is very, very rewarding and keeps you coming back for more – especially when you discover a new part of the alien star system. The graphics are superlative throughout, with stunning use of colour, and the effects and sprites are simply incredible – the psychedelic patterns between waves and in the 'Off Duty' mode are fabulous. The sound is also excellent, and the whole program is superbly presented. Martin Walker must have stretched his imagination to its limits programming Hunter's Moon – buy it and stretch yours.

"This is a game requiring the dexterity of Quedex and the shoot 'em up skills of Sanxion and Delta combined in order to succeed. A great game standing head and shoulders above the masses of shoot 'em ups currently on the market."
The Games Machine, February 1988

Martin Walker had a tough act to follow with Stavros Fasoulas' first Thalamus releases, but he's managed a first class job with Hunter's Moon. The strong initial appeal lies in the gorgeous graphics, which are extremely effective and a real pleasure to watch – especially in the loopspace trainer mode. The use of colour throughout is superb: on many occasions it appears that the 64 is supporting more shades than possible! I was also surprised by the speed at which everything moves: the loopspace sub-game is brilliantly hectic! The overall gameplay is fairly simple, but each level requires a subtly different strategy – later levels provide mazes and puzzles rather than straightforward blasting. Hunter's Moon is wonderfully presented (although the instructions are a little lacking) and should present a tough and lasting challenge.

PRESENTATION 92%
A huge list of options and superb in-game presentation. The instructions are a little confusing though.

GRAPHICS 96%
Stunning cellular constructions, with superlative use of colour.

SOUND 87%
Great title track with some lovely, atmospheric sound effects.

HOOKABILITY 88%
The game is difficult at first, but the control can be altered to suit, and the lure to continue is strong.

LASTABILITY 89%
Plenty of long-term entertainment, with 128 levels to conquer.

OVERALL 92%
An unusual puzzle/shoot 'em up, which may not appeal to everyone, but comes recommended nonetheless.

PENN IN CU

After Gary left Zzap! for Commodore User, he reviewed Hunter's Moon, not even awarding it a Screen Star! Here's his conclusion.

"With that Helsinki Hex Hero Stavros Fasoulas freezing his knackers off on the Russian border while doing National Service, it seems unlikely that he will be writing any more games for Newsfield's software house, Thalamus. Not that they need to lose any sleep over his departure... Thalamus' latest production, written by Stavros successor, Martin Walker, is easily as impressive as their three previous releases. [...]

Hunter's Moon is a well presented and highly polished piece of software. There isn't exactly a great deal of variety in the graphics and gameplay, but the movement of the Worker cells generates an impressive overall effect which complements the simplistic but mesmeric blasting action. Mr. Walker's spot effects are also first class – very clear, effective and atmospheric. Unlike the uninspiring music which is something of a disapointment by comparison."

- **Graphics 9**
- **Sound 9**
- **Toughness 8**
- **Endurance 8**
- **Value 7**
- **Overall 8**

INTERVIEW *with* MARTIN WALKER

Since 1996, Martin Walker has worked as a music technology journalist (Sound On Sound magazine). Here we present some excerpts from an interview he gave to Sonikmatter in June 2004.

Martin, can you outline the process in designing, programming and publishing a computer game ?

I'm sure the process is far more organised and streamlined than when I used to write them back in the 1980s, but I can only comment on how I did it. My Commodore 64 games all started with an idea that was a twist on something that already existed.

For instance, **Hunter's Moon** was a combination of a shoot 'em up and Spirograph – that children's game with the multiple wheels that you rolled around with a pen to create complex multi-coloured geometric drawings. This sparked off the idea of the worker cells that moved in similar ways, dropping bricks to create two-dimensional cities in space. When you first entered a game level the city might be complete or partially constructed, but it was growing or regrowing the whole time you tried to find and capture the starcells to get to the next level.

Citadel was a combination of a shoot 'em up and a board game, where your opponents only saw you as a threat when you moved from one 'square' to another. So, you could either play it by racing around blasting everything in sight, or by stopping and carefully considering each move and its outcome before taking your next step.

Normally I approached a software publisher once I had one or two basic playable levels programmed, to sell the idea and get a contract and advance to keep me going until the game was completed and royalties hopefully starting rolling in. However, I was still essentially free to let my ideas develop at their own pace, and being the creator, programmer, graphic designer, and composer, I could just run with whatever ideas occurred during this process, with a visit from the software house every few weeks to see how everything was progressing.

However, I'm sadly out of touch with games, since I haven't even seen one since 1996, when I moved over to being a writer and musician. After fourteen years in the game industry I was played out, so to speak.

What do you do outside of the music industry to keep yourself going?

For a complete break, my wife and I really love the rugged and mysterious coastline of Cornwall in the UK where we now live: it's full of stunning scenery. This inspires my own instrumental music, which one review described as "like a slowly turning kaleidoscope". I've composed three solo albums to date, and am working on a fourth, all of which I market under my own Yew Tree Music label. <<

Interview by Rick 'Brujo' Wishart, with the assistance of Brian 'Cowzar' Cowell. For the full interview, visit http://interview.sonikmatter.com

"Some games feel as if nobody ever wanted you to get very far! I set my games to be tricky for me. This should mean that king zappers find it a challenge and the rest of us can still get there."
Martin Walker

BARK AT THE MOON

While *Hunter's Moon* got a 90% score in The Games Machine and Sizzled first time around in Zzap!64, the Kixx budget release of the game (issue 73) didn't get the expected warm welcome. "A sort of homage to the sadly missed Jeff Minter games but without being unconventional enough." That and a 76% score. Hmm.

If you think that was a tad harsh you'll be blown away by the review that appeared in EMAP's 1990 Commodore 64 guide. This (rush job) special, put together by none other than Gary Penn, Julian Rignall and Ciaran Brennan gave Hunter's Moon a 2/5 score with the following conclusion: "Hunter's Moon is confusing and repetitive, and doesn't offer any of the satisfaction of a good shoot 'em up. **It looks good, it sounds good, it plays crap."** Was it Jaz, was it Gaz!? Nah, can't be. Was it Ciaran? In a recent email he proclaimed: "It was a long time ago and I don't really have that great a memory...". Right!

Swamped by a plethora of shoot 'em ups, it takes something special to rise above the morass available on the old breadbox. From your first foray into the beautiful, crystalline universe of *Hunter's Moon*, you know that you're part of something very special indeed. Martin Walker's underrated opus for Thalamus is not only visually pleasing – the use of colour is particularly stunning as your ship twists among gleaming cell-structures – but music and sound effects are also splendid, with moody dirges and alien warblings. At its heart the game is an innovative and balanced fusion of frenetic blasting, deft piloting and lateral thinking. It is difficult but perseverance leads to immense satisfaction as you conquer the challenges unique to each system. This range of challenges throughout the many levels also keeps interest-levels high. Walker not only delivers high playability but also adds a layer of polish that cinches the game's classic status. From a spray paint option to the psychedelic Loop Space sub-game to the ability to short-cut mastered systems, *Hunter's Moon* lacks nothing. Scarce are the games that represent the pinnacle of the revered lone bedroom coder from the C64's heyday. *Hunter's Moon* proudly has its rightful place among them.

OVERALL 92%

Hunter's Moon isn't a run-of-the-mill shooter: it exudes not only class and innovation, but also lays on the eye candy and demands your full attention. It's not easy, but although the game takes a few goes for you to fully understand how everything comes together, once you've learned how it works, *Hunter's Moon* is frighteningly difficult to put down. The underlying aims appear fairly simple to begin with, but once a few systems are under your belt, you realise that new tactics and strategies have to be developed on the fly. The worker cells seem truly alive, doing their own thing, and you have to figure out how to beat them. This game is definitely a thinking man's shooter, and there are usually several ways to defeat each system, ensuring longevity and tempting you into seeing if you can collect the star cells. There is even an off-duty mode, inspired by Jeff Minter's lightsynths, to 'relax' you in the middle of a tense game. Martin Walker deserves immense credit for producing something different; it's just a pity that it never got the attention it deserved.

OVERALL 94%

HOUGHTON'S MOON...

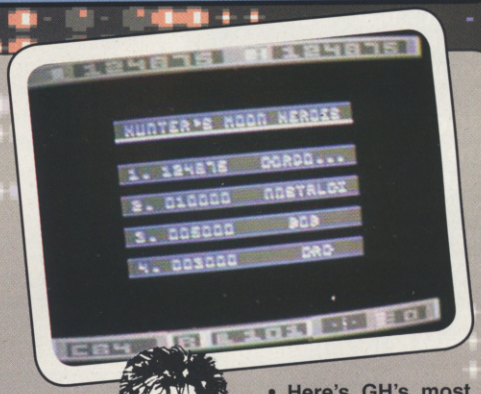
Martin Walker was an unsung genius on the Commodore 64. *Citadel* was a clever, polished and atmospheric game with many admirers, but in my opinion *Hunter's Moon* tops it. This isn't a classic blaster where twitchy reflexes, pattern learning and speed are required; it's a tough, strategic shoot 'em up which throws constant surprises in your path.

You get to know each of the star systems intimately, but knowledge is only half the battle: the difficulty ramp is beautifully judged, with everything from invisible cells to worms, traps and puzzles waiting to snatch away your remaining lives.

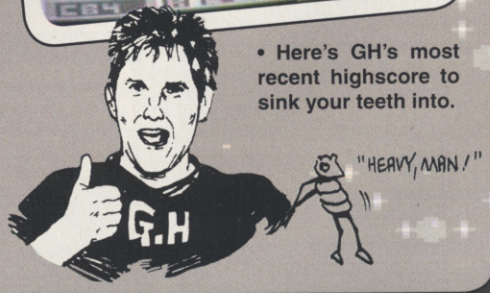
The graphics were superb for their day and still hold up surprisingly well, so I wouldn't quibble with that 96%; however, if anything, I'd add another 10% to the sound, because *Hunter's Moon* combines a rocking soundtrack with some amazing effects full of personality. I'd argue that Hookability should go down (it doesn't provide instant gratification and requires some perseverance in an age of shorter attention spans), but Lastability should nudge into the 90s: I'm still playing and enjoying it today!

Overall, I would have probably given it a Gold Medal: it's truly a great game that's stood the test of time.

Gordon Houghton



• Here's GH's most recent highscore to sink your teeth into.



Martin Walker programmed the game *Back To the Future*, one of the many lousy film tie-ins of the 1980s. It's actually funny that his best game, *Hunter's Moon*, programmed way back in 1987, is better than a lot of existing and even future games! What a concept! What a game! What polish! You could say it's the best Minter game that Minter never programmed. Personally, I reckon *Hunter's Moon* has more depth to it than almost any other game, especially shoot 'em ups, but without being complicated at all. Martin said in Zzap!64: "*Last week I wandered into a shop and bought a woolly jumper with sheep on it. Just liked it, I suppose.*" Thankfully he stayed true to himself, and delivered **another** Martin Walker classic: *Citadel*. **OVERALL 98%**

ZZAP! BACK

Presentation 98%
Superb options, clearly presented.

Graphics 94%
Incredibly pretty to look at and very effective.

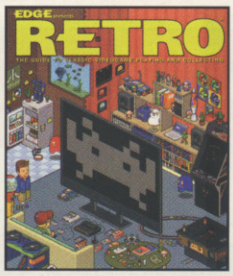
Sound 90%
Warbly title piece. Very eerie and atmospheric in-game sound effects.

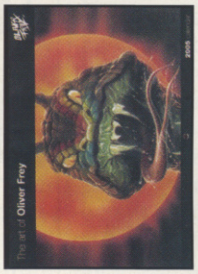
Hookability 80%
It does take a few plays to understand what's going on.

Lastability 96%
Once you figure the game out, you'll be blasting away for lightyears to come.

Overall 96%
A completely different kind of shoot 'em up. Fully deserving of a Gold Medal.

ZZAP! IN THE GAMES PRESS





Before Zzap!64 there were great games magazines that made a difference: Crash, Big K and PCG. But what happened in the land of games magazines after Zzap!'s demise?

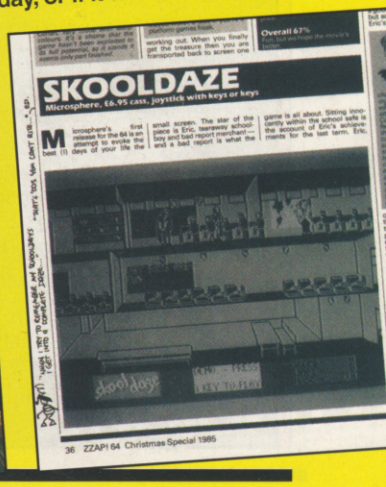
A glimpse of the true spirit of Zzap! was felt with the launch of Arcade, back in December 1998. With columns by Julian Rignall, two retro-oriented pages every month, and an enthusiastic team, it was an enjoyable read. Arcade didn't last long, though, perhaps due to competition from Edge, which was launched way back in 1993 and is still going strong today. That magazine also has obvious Zzap! ties: Chris Anderson was head honcho at Future when Edge was launched, and Steve Jarratt was its launch editor.

More recently, Edge courted the retro market and ex-Zzap! readers: its 2002 Retro Special contained an eight-page interview with key players from the golden era of our favourite magazine, while Edge #102 featured an insightful article 'The Magazine Game', looking back at the best games mags to date. Always up for some Zzap!-related news, Edge #109 featured a news item about Zzap!64 #107.

Eventually, competing publishers got in on the act. 2002 saw the launch of multi-format games magazine games™, which spoiled classic gaming fan-boys with its Crash-inspired 32-page Retro section. The magazine has interviewed Oliver Frey, and regularly uses his artwork. It was only a matter of time before a dedicated retro magazine appeared: Live Publishing's Retro Gamer filled the gap in 2004. Its second issue offered an insightful article about Crash/Zzap! towers by Matthew Uffindell, while issues 11 and 14 featured an Oliver Frey calendar and Gordon Houghton interview respectively. If you've missed out, try emailing the subscriptions department of the relevant publisher, or track down back issues on eBay – if you can afford them!

ZZAP! BACK SKOOLDAZE

Zzap!back with us to Zzap!64 issue 9, 1985/1986. We've updated the original black and white review to a full-colour two-page spread. And on page 18, we check out whether Skooldaze would get a good report today, or if it would be expelled.



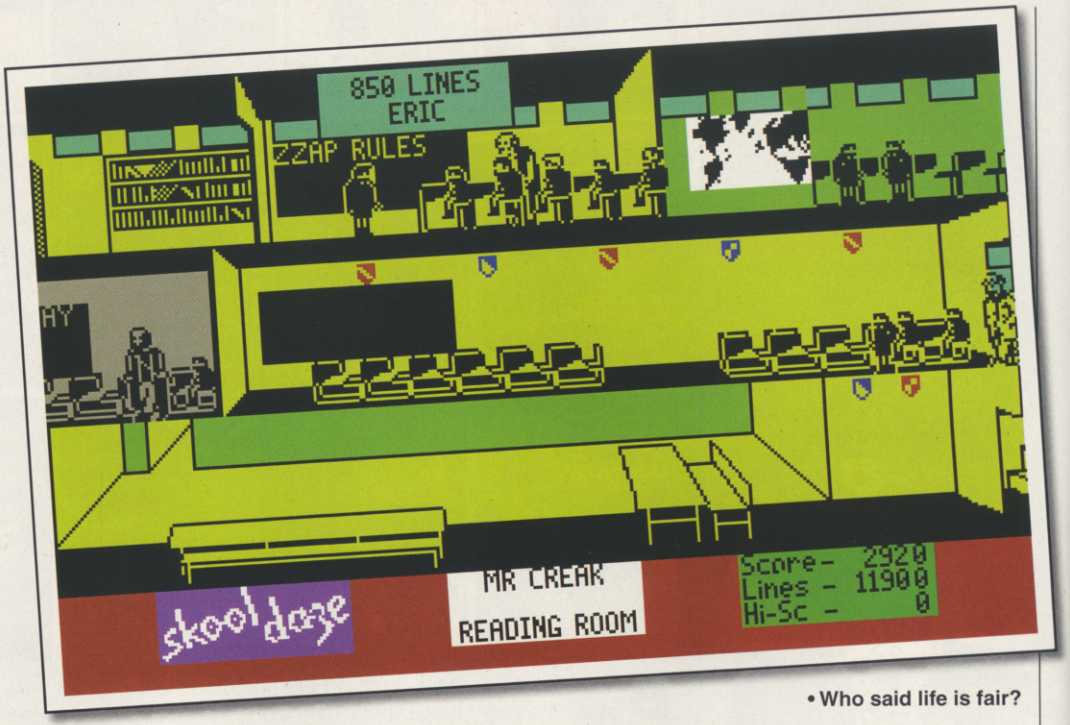
"NICE TO SEE THE FACE..."

SKOOLDAZE

Microsphere, £ 6,95 cass, joystick with keys, or keys

Microsphere's first release for the 64 is an attempt to evoke the best (!) days of your life in the small screen. The star of the piece is Eric, tearaway schoolboy and bad report merchant – and a bad report is what the game is all about.

Sitting innocently within the school safe is the account of Eric's achievements for the last term. Eric, being the little beggar that he is, doesn't take long to read what is written therein and discovers the news definitely isn't good. The headmaster hasn't seen the report yet (phew!) but when he does his reaction could be likened to that of a low yield nuclear device going off – not very desirable at all! Realising the seriousness of his dilemma, Eric decides it would be best if the head didn't see his end of term report, and hits upon a plan to retrieve the incriminating documents from the school safe . . .

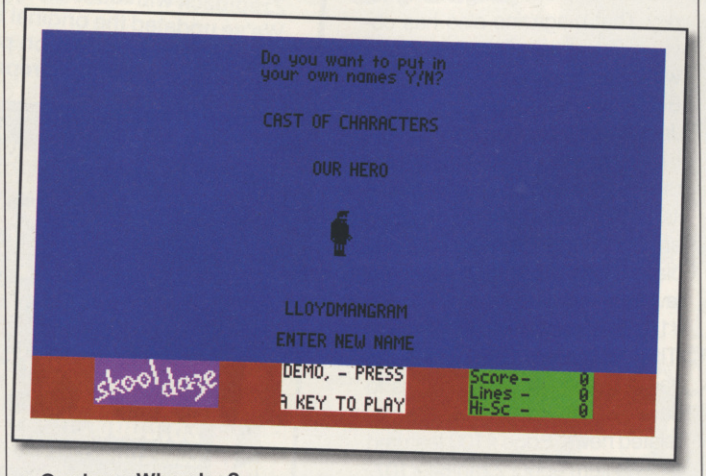


• Who said life is fair?

The school's security is of a high standard and the combination to the safe is very well protected – each teacher only knows a fragment of the combination. To get the masters to spill the beans, Eric has to set the school shields, decorating the walls, flashing. The shields need a good bash to get them to flash, but some are too high to reach. Eric's only solution is to biff one of his 'friends' wandering about the place, and then clamber on the prostrate form of his chum to gain extra height – brutal but effective. Once all the shields are flashing, Eric can knock the teachers for six and, while stars are whizzing about their heads, the extra confusion caused by the stroboscopic shields will make them tell their part of the code – except for the History master, who's memory is not what it used to be and has had to have his part of the code 'hypnotically implanted'. It can only be retrieved by finding his date of birth.

As in any school, the day is timetabled and split into breaks and lesson times. Relevant information is relayed to you via a window at the bottom of the screen and when the bell goes for a lesson, you are informed which lesson to attend and who will be taking the class.Failure to attend a lesson will incur a penalty of a few hundred lines from any teacher who finds Eric loitering in the corridors. If Eric amasses ten thousand lines or more, he's out on his ear and the game is over.

Playtime occasionally proves dangerous, as there is usually someone trying, metaphorically speaking, to drop you in it. Usually one of the lower form boys tells Eric what's going on and that Eric must prevent it happening before the end of break. Einstein, the school swot, is keen on running off to Mr Whackit (Mr Wacker -Ed) and informing him of any plans. If he succeeds, Eric has to do two thousand lines. Not much



• Our hero. Who else?

This is a great little game and one which I played a lot on the Spectrum last summer. What particularly appealed to me was the multitude of actions that your character is capable of performing – punching, firing a catty, whanging teachers, etc – the attention to detail is immense. Completing the task is no mean feat and it requires a bit of thought as to how you're going to get the combination of the safe. The graphics are very similar to the Spectrum version, but they are still good – especially when you consider the amount of characters milling around the school. If you do want a really original game that is challenging and fun, then look no further than this, it's a real gem.

1112 hrs. "Arrive at Zzap! Towers, look through piles of rubbish on desk for empty mug. Scrape mould out of mug. Make cup of coffee (leaving milk out of office fridge so there's yoghurt for lunch), drink coffee, eat rolls, shout at colleagues."
An average day in the life of Gary Penn

• Here comes trouble!

Unlike Julian, I have never had the opportunity to play the Spectrum version of Skooldaze, and as it's over a year old now, I did wonder whether this conversion would prove a bit stale. However, on playing it became clear that the game's many unusual and original elements have worn well. Graphically I found Skooldaze very poor and I would have thought a bit more colour could have been injected into it. Also, I feel that the screens should have scrolled rather than 'slid', and the sound effects and music could have been better. 'Cosmetics' aside, Skooldaze is a fun game to play (and watch, in fact) due to its highly innovative nature.

fun by anybody's standards.

Eric is equipped with a number of essential weapons, though not surprisingly, the use of all of them is banned within the school. However, he can only get in trouble if caught – any nefarious behaviour in full view of a teacher results in a couple of hundred lines. The catapult is quite handy – an elastic propelled missile is quite enough to knock over both teachers and pupils. A good old fashioned punch fells the hardiest of schoolchildren and is brought into action with the H key. Unfortunately, teachers are not impressed by physical violence and punish Eric with yet more lines whenever they witness attacks.

Throughout the game a large part of the screen is taken up by a 3D view of the school, designed just like the real thing, with an assembly hall, the head's study, classrooms and other such scenery. Only a small portion of the school is shown at any lime, so when Eric moves left and right it 'scrolls'. Eric's chums wander around the school, each behaving according to the dictates of their own personality. All the standard stereotypes are included, such as Einstein the school swot, Angelface the bully, and Boy Wander – the tearaway and trouble maker. The teachers also have their own personalities, ranging from the hip and trendy Mr Withit to the decrepit Mr Creak.

I really enjoyed this game. Just like the real thing, Skooldaze is really vicious. Get bored and you can wander round bashing up both pupils and teachers alike. This is great fun, especially if you've renamed the various characters present. The joy that could be derived from giving old school enemies a pixel pasting is surprisingly great. Graphically, the game is great until it tries to scroll. Though mainly monochromatic, the display is detailed and interesting. Skooldaze is quite a good game despite it's arrival on the 64 a year after its Spectrum incarnation. The idea is refreshingly original and the game is very playable. Definitely worth a look at.

PRESENTATION 88%
Humourous, befitting instructions and many excellent touches, such as the option to rename the characters.

GRAPHICS 59%
Characters are reasonably well animated for their size, but colour is sparse and 'scrolling' is poor.

SOUND 32%
A few, weak sound effects and a short tune.

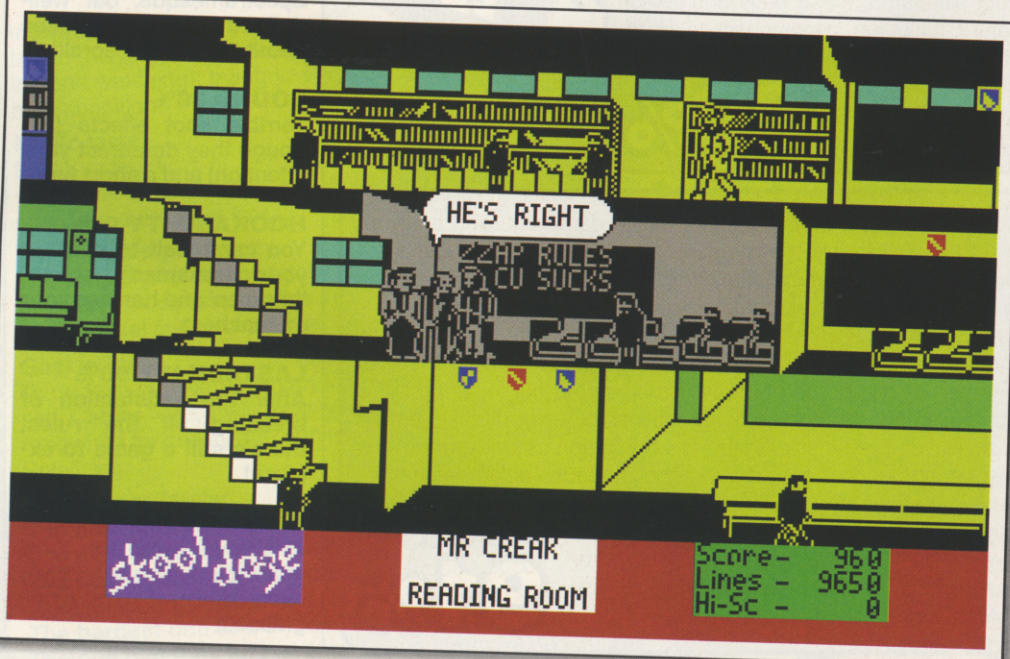
HOOKABILITY 74%
Harder to get into than the real thing, but certainly more enjoyable.

LASTABILITY 77%
Probably the first time you'll actually want to stay at school!

VALUE FOR MONEY 82%
Worth sacrificing a few school dinners for.

OVERALL 78%
Schooldays have never been such fun.

• At last, it looks like Lloyd gets some unexpected support



2110 hrs. "Fall into deep sleep after ravages of strenuous day in preparation for following day's tiring routine. Dream of doing unpleasant things to Competition Minion and pouring coffee into Lloyd's Hermes while insulting Crash and Amtix! staffers."
The continuing adventures of Gary Penn

'WEEP!'

I remember getting this on the Spectrum (boo, hiss – Ed.), and looked forward to the C64 version, hoping for an upgraded game. Sadly, what we got was a straight Spectrum port, thereby missing out on the chance of sampled grunts and groans as you created mayhem within the 'skool'! The graphics and sound are therefore functional, but the gameplay still manages to shine through. Nothing has been created since that recreates the sheer fun of running riot in an educational establishment, (apart from the Speccy-only follow-up *Back to Skool* and PC remake Klass of '99),chalking obscenities on the blackboards, firing a peashooter, jumping on the bullies to get to that higher shield, and even bouncing peas off of teachers' heads to access some of the harder-to-get targets! It is very easy to forget the goal (to open the safe), due to the sheer amount of fun to be had along the way, plus there's the possibility of learning a fair amount if you turn up to lesson and sit still (yeah, right). Someone really needs to do a follow-up for modern-day consoles: "Please Sir, I cannot tell a lie. We need a *Skooldaze 20th Anniversary Special Edition*!"

OVERALL 90%

Admittedly, there were a couple of Speccy ports that actually added something to the C64's games library! *Head over Heels* and *The Great Escape* spring to mind – both of which are classic arcade adventures – but *Skooldaze* is something of a classic, too. The game's innovative, wholly original concept and design is unsurpassed, even 20 years later. I wonder why EA didn't come up with 'The Sims at skool' – is it too hard to do? Well, this game achieved much of that, within the confines of the C64's meagre RAM – an amazing feat! But the game itself isn't limited: you have the freedom to wander about the school, forgetting about the main aim of the game, scrutinizing everything in sight – very satisfying; and you can also change the names of the main characters – a simply brilliant feature. Rumours suggest that the *Skooldaze* series should have been a trilogy. Unfortunately, episode II *Back to Skool* never made it to the C64, and if there's ever going to be a belated episode III, don't ask Lucasfilm to do it, and remember, whatever happens: it's better in 2D!

OVERALL 90%

With its Spectrum graphics, pathetic sound and bad controls, *Skooldaze* should be an example of the nasty games of yesteryear, surpassed by years of superior gaming. Funnily enough, though, *Skooldaze* is one of the most enjoyable and original games of the era. Who would not delight at the ability to revisit school and be the hero, shooting the bully with your catapult, or knocking down the teachers? The game's structure, built around a school day and lessons, is a fabulous idea, and I had great fun running down the corridors and punching everyone in sight while keeping my eye on getting all those shields flashing. As said, this is a Spectrum port and the game's graphics and sound are therefore limited, but this adds a cartoon-like charm to the proceedings. More importantly, though, the game made a mark on the gaming world due to its many original ideas – and rightly so: *Skooldaze* is a bit of a landmark game. You do not get many school simulators these days and Skool Daze is a refreshing arcade adventure, full of fun, harking back to when computer games dared do something different. All I can say is: 'Please Sir, I cannot tell a lie: *Skooldaze* is still great fun after all these years'. Now, why didn't they convert *Back to Skool* to the C64?

OVERALL 89%

I played this on my mate's Speccy when it first came out, and enjoyed it a great deal. Obviously the programmers haven't utilised the extra capabilities of our favourite computer, but that doesn't matter, because *Skooldaze* is one of the most original and compelling games around. There are so many elements to the game: often I would just cause as much chaos in the school as possible without collecting any shields, which is as enjoyable as playing the game properly! It's also possible to rename the school teachers, so mine ended up being replicas of my greatest enemies at Dyke House Comprehensive! Although the graphics and sound are Spectrumesque, it doesn't matter a great deal, because all of the characters are very well drawn and easily identifiable. If you are sick of playing the same type of games all the time, try *Skooldaze* – it will make you laugh, it will make you scream (when getting lines), and it will make you come back, time after time. A classic!

OVERALL 91%

ZZAP! BACK

PRESENTATION 90%
Sufficient for the game, but hugely bolstered by the innovative option enabling you to change the names of the main characters.

GRAPHICS 55%
Spectrumesque, but well-defined characters. Shame about the juddery scrolling

SOUND 30%
Terrible spot effects (although they do attract your attention) and a short tune.

HOOKABILITY 90%
You can't wait to beat up your (renamed) school 'buddies' and harrass your ex-teachers.

LASTABILITY 90%
After the satisfaction of breaking all the rules, there's still a game to explore!

OVERALL 90%
Ten times more fun than your own school days, even more if you wore glasses.

"OLDIES CAN BE GOLDIES..." ... AND IT'S BETTER ON THE SPECTRUM!"

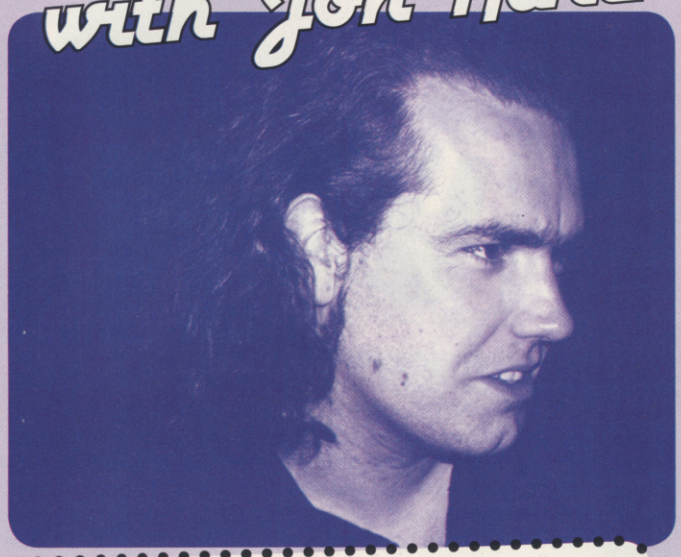
"THEY'RE BRILL

ANOTHER SENSIBLE INTERVIEW

By Andreas Wallström

• Issue 23 of Zzap!64 from March 1987 – 18 years ago! Time sure flies when you're having fun!

with Jon Hare



THE JON HARE FILE:

Birth place and date:
Ilford, Essex, January 20, 1966.

Interests:
Music (playing, writing, listening and dancing); football (playing and watching); trying to play golf; learning about the human condition.

Music taste:
Fairly varied. Lots of 1970s stuff like Pink Floyd, David Bowie, Black Sabbath and Gong. Funk, jazz, trance... Music that cries and music that flies.

What makes you happy:
The sensation of feeling totally free (when none of your energy or consciousness at all is being used to restrain yourself) – and to feel loved, of course.

Goal in life:
To understand everything and to be totally at peace with myself. Career-wise, I will have reached my goal when I am as renowned for quality and genius as Picasso, Shakespeare or Spielberg.

First game: Twister
The best one: Sensible Soccer
The worst one: Sensible Golf
The best arcade conversion: Microprose Soccer (Tehkan World Cup... shh!)
The hardest one to work on: Megalomania
The one that took lots of time: Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll
The one that was done really fast: Galax-i-Birds
The one that drove you insane: Sensible Soccer '98

Welcome, Jon. It's great to be able to do this interview with you. How are things?
I am good, thank you. Life is its usual transient pointless self but I got used to that a long time ago.

Zzap!64 got launched 20 years ago this month. Do you have any specific memories about the magazine and the people who created it?
To me Zzap!64 is more than just a magazine. Zzap! Towers was at the very centre of the birth of the British games industry that has occupied me and a lot of my friends and colleagues ever since.

When I look back at visits to Zzap! in the 1980s it reminds me of watching black and white videos of Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Burdon and Joan Baez hanging out in London in the 1960s. Informal gatherings of teenagers and men in their early twenties, programmers, artists, musicians and journalists alike, oblivious to the fact that we were in fact pioneers of a wonderful new entertainment form.

Zzap!64 was, to all of us that worked on the Commodore 64 at that time, what the Cavern was to the Beatles or the UFO club was to early Floyd. It was at the very centre of a new movement – it was the hub around which we all turned... And its pioneering, educated and objective influence is impossible to replicate in this era of gaming. Zzap!64 is an institution and I feel very lucky to have been a part of it.

"Zzap!64 is an institution and I feel very lucky to have been a part of it"

Looking back at the games you did in the old days, are you satisfied with what you've created?
I have been very lucky in this industry: I have made money and achieved personal satisfaction, critical success and 'big fish in a small pond'-style fame. What more could a man ask for from his career? I consider Sensible to have been the top C64 developer and the top Amiga developer in the world at its peak, and the early years – 1986-1995 – were the best.

Tell us about the beginning of your computer career. What made you interested in computers?
To be honest, I have never been a particularly techie person. In fact, I hate my PC more than virtually any other possession I have. But what got me interested was the ability to create something on an exciting new medium.

When I grew up there were not many home computers around.

• Someone over at Ocean's art department got a bit confused...

My first experience was probably Pong at a junior school bazaar, followed by playing my friend's Atari VCS when I went to his house. When I was 17 (about two years before we set up Sensible), we got a VCS in our house. Tank Battle, Pong and Star Wars are the games I remember. Then, of course, there were arcade machines: Space Invaders, Defender, Joust, Centipede, Nemesis...

I was already writing music with Chris Yates. I was an art student (recently dropped out), and I was at Chris's house a lot – we were constantly creating things. I found it great that Chris was a lot more techie than me: his technical skills gave me access to being creative on computers with him.

During a typical day at Chris's – pre-computer games – we would be in the spare room, recording a song, and in the middle of it Chris would take out a screwdriver and start hacking away at his home-made effects pedal while I would scratch my head and rewrite some of the lyrics. This pretty much sums up our working relationship and Sensible Software was a natural extension on a different media of the creative partnership that Chris and I had already formed with music.

Where did the idea for Wizball come from?
It started with the control of the ball itself, which Chris did. I must have drawn a stupid face on it and I can't remember where the catellite came from. The game was influenced fairly heavily by Nemesis at the time. I think it was probably my idea to colour in the landscapes. I can't remember who came up with the teardrop collection idea.I know that I wanted to put a lot more in the bit where you went in the lab to mix the colours up with characters, but that kind of weird stuff happened later in Wizkid.

"Ocean's marketing was terrible"

What parts of the games did you design, and what did Chris do?
For the C64 games in general, Chris designed the controls, I designed the levels, and we shared design of the game structure. Maybe in games like Microprose Soccer and 3D Tennis, I may have had some input regarding controls. Certainly for SEUCK, Chris worked on the bulk of the structure, but in general that was how it went for our C64 games.

What was the original idea behind Parallax, and how did it evolve into the final product?
The original idea was the control system of flying above and below things. This was something Chris had come up with. The controls were excellent and very innovative at the time. I can't remember where the ideas for the computers and stuff came from.

I know we wanted to do a lot more with it than we did but it was fun as it was anyway. Once the controls were nailed and the 'suck-in/spit-out' portals added, I designed the graphics and then all of the levels, and Chris added more effects like the moving walls. The game was inspired by a number of arcade games and then we added our own original twists and concepts. We were just having fun.

How was it to work with Martin Galway?
In my opinion Martin was the king of C64 music. He made it sound like a new instrument, and we were lucky that he worked for Ocean at the time.

Parallax and Wizball are considered to be two of the best games ever released for the C64. Did working for yourselves give you the opportunity to fine-tune the details, thereby giving the gamers more value for money?
That's definitely the case in all of our Sensible games. Up until 1995 we were small enough and independent enough and creatively trusted enough by our publishers to be able to spend extra time working on games.

The key to it was that when we went over time with a game, we never ever charged our publishers extra money. We could afford to do this because our teams were so small and none of them were employees even through the Amiga days. We only used people who themselves had a financial interest in the long term success of the game. In the C64 times there was only me and Chris and occasionally Martin Galway to pay. We all had a financial interest in the long term success and sales of the game, so we put extra effort in for nothing at the time, in order to have a chance of earning more royalties from a superior quality game... and it worked.

• Funny little games, back in the day...
(ad taken from Look and Learn magazine 1978)

• The original, awesome Bob Wakelin artwork supporting Sensible Software's top C64 titles

Unfortunately, as games development has evolved, a sub-five-man team is no longer a viable option on any easy-to-develop-for mainstream formats. Therefore, our old approach to development does not really make sense any more. This is sad because the increase in the quality in the games is very evident.

Did Ocean at any point give you specific directions?
Ocean didn't say anything to us at all regarding Parallax or Wizball except "Thank You". They were very receptive to our ideas and in those days there was no interference at all from anybody in the publishing houses. Colin Stokes and Gary Bracey were our main contacts as far as I can remember, and they were very easy and trustful regarding the content we chose.

I wish modern publishers would take note of the fact that all three Ocean games we did were classics and none had any publisher interference whatsoever.

What about marketing? Did Ocean and other companies do a good job in that department?
Ocean's marketing was terrible. Parallax, Wizball and Wizkid should all have done much better than they did in terms of sales. Mind you, I am not quite sure how reliable our royalty statements were anyway, but chart positions don't lie and we were disappointed in the sale of all these games, particularly Wizkid.

Palace did some marketing with SEUCK and 3D Tennis, and Microprose marketed Microprose Soccer pretty well. After a while we took it upon ourselves to do our own 'free' marketing in the magazines by providing editorial articles – another lesson that could do with being relearned in the current market.

What are your fondest memories of the C64?
My very fondest memories of the C64 are myself and Chris playing Dropzone on it and Chris being so pissed off with me for mistiming the smartbomb that he picked up the whole thing and threw it out of his bedroom window where it shattered on the path below. Now that was fun!

And the best and worst things about the C64?
The very best thing was how easy it was to develop and publish on. It was such a creative machine and it looked great for its time. We were very lucky to have been working on such a free platform with none of the litigious issues that plague everything these days.

There was also Zzap!64: godfather of all decent computer game magazines. The worst thing was the size of the disk drives. You could park a small car inside one – and, of course, those hideous brown colour schemes!

"Zzap!64 – godfather of all decent computer game magazines..."

Who is your favourite programmer, artist, musician and game from the old days?
Programmer: Chris Yates (the best technical/creative C64 programmer in my eyes). Artist: Dan Malone (ex-Palace, a great bloke and a true artist). Musician: Martin Galway. Game: Master of the Lamps.

What's the most valuable experience you've got from your career in the games business?
A belief in my own abilty to visualise an idea and see it through to its completion and to manage a team of people during the development of a large creative task. And people all round the world still remember games I have worked on and genuinely love them. That is a very special feeling that will never go away.

And the proudest moment in your career?
Wizball's Game of the Decade award from Zzap!64. Receiving the Indin Award for Best Developer for the second year running in 1993. This was the very peak for Sensible.

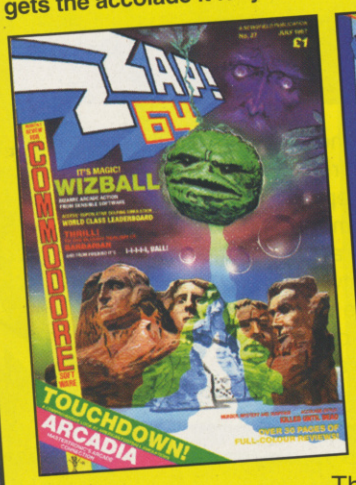
What have you been up to lately?
After selling Sensible to Codemasters, I worked with them for three years. I now have a studio with Mike Montgomery and John Phillips of Bitmap Brothers fame. We are doing mobile games and design/production stuff. Sensible Soccer, Cannon Fodder and lots more are coming to your phone soon.
Just watch this space! <<

Visit Andreas Wallström's excellent site: www.c64hq.com for the full interview.

"Undoubtedly, the strangest programmers around today, Sensi earned their reputation through hard work, being weird hippies, and generally producing some of the best C64 games ever."
Commodore Zone

ZZAP! BACK

Zzap!back with Jon to **Zzap!64, issue 27, from July 1987.** We present the original Sizzling review, restyled. And on page 24, Wizball finally gets the accolade it fully deserved.



SIZZLER

WIZBALL

Ocean £8,95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick only

• A unique, high quality production from Sensible Software.

Wizworld was a peaceful and colourful place-until the evil Zark and his horrible henchsprites drained its life and colour, leaving behind them a grey, drab and generally unhappy world.

Enter our two gallant heroes – Wiz and his cat Nifta. Together, they alone can restore the lost life, laughter – and more importantly, colour – to this desolate waste.

Wizworld is split into eight levels, stacked on top of each other like a giant sandwich, with Level One at the bottom.

To enable the Wiz to move and breathe more easily, he magically shrinks himself and steps inside a highly manoeuverable ball – the *Wizball*. The screen scrolls as the Wiz negotiates the landscape in his strange spherical vehicle.

Only three adjacent incomplete levels can be accessed at any time – thus Level Four can only be accessed when Level One is complete. Level Five when Level Two is complete and so on. Wiz moves between levels through a series of tubes – arrows half-hidden in the landscape indicating whether the tube leads up or down.

Initially, moving the joystick left or right spins the ball, causing it to bounce when it hits the ground. A pearl appears when a molecule or eight aliens have been shot – collecting the orb highlights an icon at the top of the screen, and a quick waggle of the joystick adds the highlighted feature to Wiz's armoury.

Zark's sprites inhabit each level, some floating harmlessly, others spewing a deadly hail of bullets. Bubbles of colour also float around, bursting when shot and releasing a droplet of coloured chemical. However, droplets can only be collected by Nifta the cat, who appears when the corresponding icon has been lit and activated.

Holding down the firebutton transfers control to Nifta, allowing him to collect colour droplets and fill the respective mini-cauldron at bottom of screen. Depending on the target colour, a fourth mini-cauldron fills up. Yellow is made by collecting red and green droplets in equal proportions. Orange requires a greater proportion of red – it's worth bearing in mind that equal proportions of red, green and blue make white. However, should the colour mixing prove too overwhelming, you can always collect as much of each colour as possible.

Collecting a grey droplet endows the cat with 128 lives, whereas a black droplet makes the scenery go dark – vision is restored by shooting a specified number of aliens. Catching

Weapons table:

THRUST and ANTI-GRAV: provide greater control over the ball

SLAP WEAPON: pressing the fire button activates beams

DOUBLE: splits the fire power in both directions

CATALYTE: holding down the fire button transfers directional control to the cat

BLAZERS: slightly more powerful firepower

WIZSPRAY or CATSPRAY: multi-directional firepower for either Wiz or Nifta

SMARTBOMB: destroys all aliens and bullets on screen

SHIELDS: temporary immunity from aliens and bullets

Wizball is undoubtedly the finest release so far this year. The scenario and game design are so original that it's almost off-putting at first, but it only takes a short time to master controlling the *Wizball* and cat and then work out exactly what's going on. Playing is a joy, and there's plenty of entertainment for anyone who's willing to attempt colouring in the landscape. The graphics, sound and general presentation are second to none, and combined with the thoughtful attention to detail and the comprehensive series of game variations, you end up with something rather special. Don't delay, go to your software shop and say "Mr Retailer, swiftly hand me a copy of *Wizball* so that I can go home and play it forthwith."

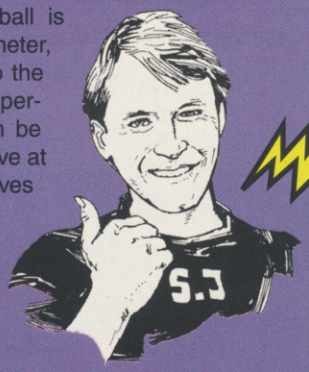
Sensible Software have designed *Wizball* with the player in mind – it's extremely user-friendly. What I find most impressive though, is that the concept and execution is so tight that there's very little room for improvement. It's a distinctly professional production, its style and content placing it head and shoulders above existing software. The control method is initially awkward, but adds to the playability when mastered. *Wizball* is simply brilliant – one of the best-presented, most graphically and aurally attractive and addictive pieces of software available.

"Highly original if thoroughly weird nightmare twist on a real-life colouring book. Lots to keep the blaster addicts happy too. Not one to play after a heavy session at the boozer."
EMAP's Commodore Guide

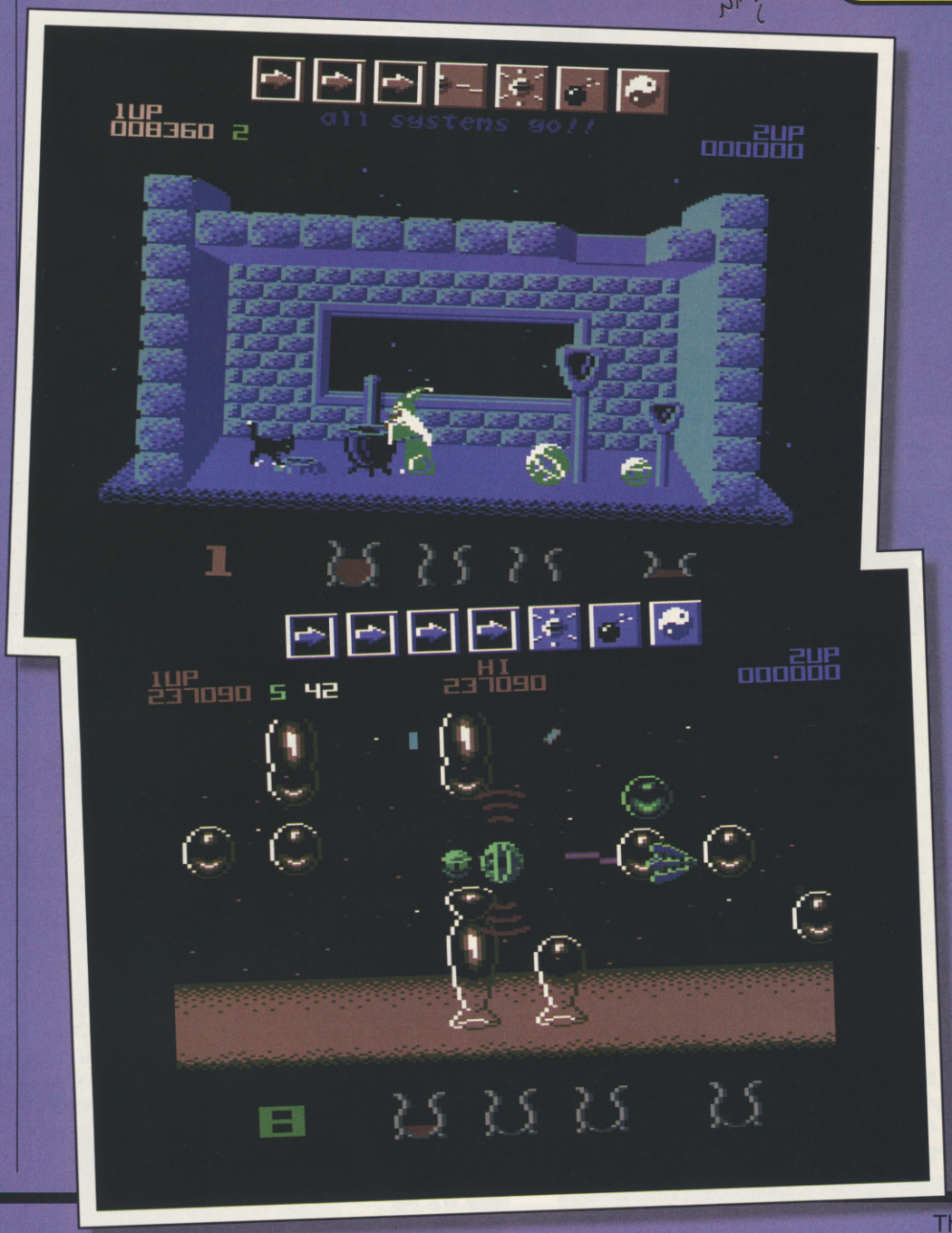
a light blue droplets results in a 'Filth Raid' – sirens blaring and blue lights flashing, six ships zoom in for the kill. A carelessly consumed purple droplet drives the cat insane, causing him to zip around the screen miaowing with rage until he's killed. The white droplet gives an extra life.

Levels are completed by collecting and mixing the three missing colours, while completing a colour takes the wizard into a bonus section set in outermost space. Aliens appear in formation, and shooting 255 of them gains an extra life – another life is collected halfway through the bonus stage. When the bonus level is complete or the Wiz dies, he enters the Wizlab, where the ball is left at a parking meter, the colour is put into the landscape, and a permanent weapon can be initiated. If Nifta is alive at this point, his nine lives are replenished.

When all three colours have been put back into a landscape, you are treated to a view of your work while bonus points are added to your score. Complete all eight levels and… well, that's for you to find out.



At last something to enthuse about! *Wizball* appears like a breath of fresh air to our tired old 64's, being the most polished and well presented game to appear for months. It's fun to play too – difficult mind you, but fun. It's certainly a very individual concept and has loads of neat touches like the 'Filth Raid', the mini Mount Rushmore landscape, the squeal of the cat when he's close to dying, the gorgeous animation when the *Wizball* appears and… I could go on and on. No single aspect has been compromised for the sake of another: the music and sound effects are great, the control is good, the gameplay's structure is excellent, and the entire package is very cleverly designed. Miss this and you're missing the best program of the year.



PRESENTATION 98%
Brilliant – flawless if it wasn't for the slightly confusing instructions. Superb attract sequence complete with high-score table and Wiztips, plus restart and pause feature, multi-player and team-options, intelligent joystick sensing, a novel control mode and no need to use the keyboard to activate weapons!

GRAPHICS 92%
Attractive backdrops and landscape features, reasonable sprites and good use of colour.

SOUND 96%
Fabulous title tune and jingles, and good spot effects.

HOOKABILITY 81%
Not instantly playable, but highly addictive once the concept and control mode is grasped.

LASTABILITY 92%
Action-packed and compulsive, with eight increasingly difficult landscapes to colour in.

VALUE 95%
An essential purchase.

OVERALL 96%
A superlative piece of software. Slick in virtually every aspect, wholly original and immensely playable.

"Sensible Software desperately wanted to be rock stars, and demanded Ocean to pay for them to fly (FLY!) from London to Manchester for an important meeting. They did!"
Commodore Zone

ZZAP! BACK

Was Wizball underrated?

Commodore Zone, an excellent fanzine which nicely filled the gap left by C-Force and C-Format, ran between September 1995 and winter 2001. In the final issue (#16), Warren Pilkington revealed more about Jon Hare's sentiments when *Wizball* didn't get the Gold Medal it deserved. Waz wrote in the 'Commodore Controversies' section of the mag:

"While everyone was almost unanimous in its praise after a lull and slump in the C64 gaming industry, and while most of the Zzap!64 staff loved it to bits, it came to pass that Gary Penn (Editor at the time) decided that even with the game receiving 96% overall (and 99% in other departments) it still wasn't enough to give the game a Zzap! Gold Medal, which it richly deserved. Many people complained vociferously to Zzap!64, and it did rile Sensible a bit. A few months later, the budget game *Oh No!* was released by Silverbird and the game complete screen (for those of you who've never seen it) says the following:

"Oh yes, your oxes have been succesfully herded to the safety of Dimension X where the princess will use them to fend off the nasty monster called Gary. She will repay you handsomely with a heated game of Wizball, the loser has to play Nebulus for ever. The end, or is it the beginning?"

Commodore User's Mike Pattenden only gave "Wizzball" [sic] (they must have only seen the tape's cover!) an overall score of 8 (with only sound scoring 9) and although *Wizball* scored a 'C+VG HIT!' it only scored an '8' in the value and playability stakes.

But, although *Wizball* originally just missed out on a Gold Medal, Zzap!64, later on, never tried to hide its enthusiasm for this particularly brilliant game. Zzap!64 issue 43 (November 1988) contained the DEF Guide to shoot 'em ups. With a 98% score, *Wizball* won the DEF Award. Paul Glancey commented: "*Wizball* is nothing short of being a work of mad genius! ...I don't know how it missed out on a Gold Medal back in issue 27, but hopefully the DEF Award will go some way to reconciling that small misdemeanor."

Gordon Houghton continued: "I've played it and completed it, and I still play it – if you ever see it lying around, snap it up, because it's not only the best shoot 'em up around, it's one of the best games of all time."

DEF AWARD!

One month later *Wizball* was voted number one by Zzap!64 in The Top 20 All-Time Greats, before *Paradroid*, *The Sentinel* and the likes. Finally, in issue 55, *Wizball* got its budget release and scored a Silver Medal, with a nifty 97% score.

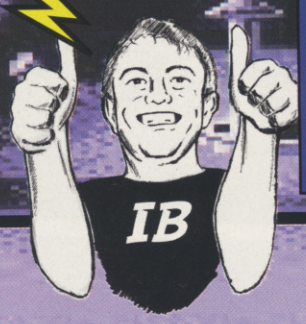
Distinctive, distinguished, highly playable, audibly accomplished, witty, challenging, satisfying... As was the case with all reviews, the reviewer's mood on the day played a part – and I must have been real pissy. It should have gotten a Gold Medal.

Wizball looks like a simple shoot 'em up at first, but it's full of little touches that make it a very special game. The control method is awkward at first, but it becomes more comfortable as you attain power-ups. The cat, with its multiple functions, helps a lot, protecting from aliens and giving you more firepower, but it does make overall control of the game more difficult. Even the trick of hiding beneath the horizon, so as not to be reached by bullets (which is most likely a bug turned into a feature), works incredibly well. Also, the brilliant graphics and sound make the game very atmospheric and enjoyable. Far from being a mindless shoot 'em up, Wizball is an absolutely brilliant arcade game, which puts the mind to good use as well as the reflexes.

OVERALL 94%

Wizball is still a great game and in a class of its own. It's kind of a shoot 'em up, but with more going on. The baddies are a nuisance and wiping them out is important, but it's not the sole point of the game. It's the extras that make Wizball – even today – quite original. Collecting colour drops with the help of your cat, to bring colour back into the world, is not an everyday game plot. It's been eighteen years since Wizball was released and it's still able to keep my attention for many hours – and that's something most games old or new can't do any more! Every time you play it, you get a little further, and you just have to have another game to see if you can get far enough to gain access to a new level. The game is an example of the excellent software Sensible Software were able to produce and why it didn't get a Gold Medal in its original Zzap! review is a question we may never know the answer to! (Up until now, that is – Ed.)

OVERALL 99%



ZZAP! BACK

PRESENTATION 98%
Everything is brilliant about this game, from the on-screen instructions to the awesome artwork.

GRAPHICS 90%
Original backdrops and well-drawn main sprites. Only the aliens lack a certain something.

SOUND 98%
Possibly Martin Galway's best tune ever, plus superb FX.

HOOKABILITY 90%
Once you get into it...

LASTABILITY 98%
...there's no getting out!

OVERALL 97%
There are only a couple of C64 games that deserve the title 'all-time classic'. Of those, Wizball reigns supreme!

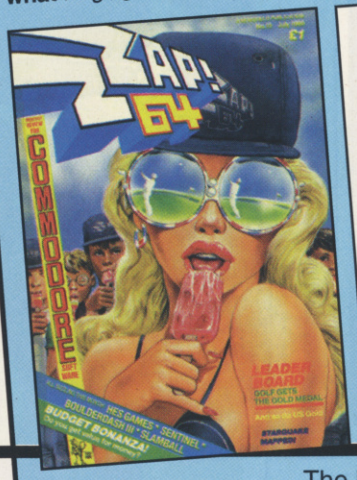
RAGING BEAST

1986 was *the* year for games with bulls in them. As the original Zzap! review of this gem stated, *Raging Beast* was "the first computer game to simulate the Spaniard's favourite pastime – the controversial and bloody sport of bullfighting". Bullfighting with a twist, we hasten to add. *Raging Beast* is actually a parody, since the bull seems to be fighting *you* while you try to throw a loop over its head. A very dangerous idea, as many gamers will have experienced in that particular summer of '86 (and beyond), biting the dust and being trampled under foot by Alfonso, the raging bull in question.

Later that same year, the Speccy had the dubious privilege to introduce the software translation of the real thing. The game? *Olé, toro*. While Computer and Video Games bravely rated the game '0' (value even "less than 0") and spoke of a "crude and barbaric game that should never have been released", Crash said: "gory, but good fun". Unsurprisingly, a number of people sent in letters complaining about their (p)review. While *Olé, toro* was indeed crude, *Raging Beast* was original and funny. One of the best parts of the game was when you (involuntarily) ended up on the bull's back, riding it, rodeo style. "Now that would be a neat idea for a subgame in *World Games* ", thought Epyx, scoring a Gold Medal with it in the November issue (#19) of that same bull-invaded software year: 1986.

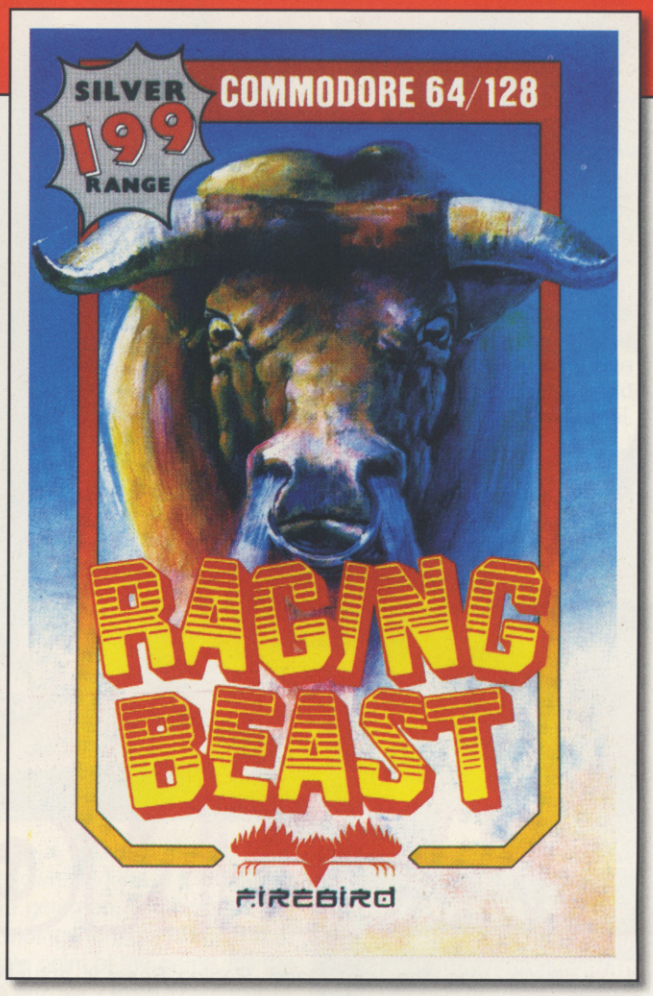
We're zzapping back to **Zzap!64 issue 15, July 1986.** On the next two pages we present to you the **original,** but totally restyled, **review.** After that, four 'veterans' explain what *Raging Beast* is worth in the 21st century.

ZZAP! BACK



RAGING BEAST

Firebird £ 1,99 cass, joystick or keyboard



Raging Beast is the first computer game to simulate the Spaniard's favourite pastime – the controversial and bloody sport of bullfighting. So don your trendy Matador gear, step into Corrida and take on the meanest bull in the sport's history – Alfonso the Awesome.

Armed with only a red towel you must take on an angry, sweaty mass of bovine meat and make him look totally silly by plonking a rosette over his ugly fizzog.

You start in the middle of the arena and Alfonso walks on from the side, breathing heavily and staring angrily at you. Pushing the joystick in the respective direction makes the matador sprint around the arena. When he stops you can make him shake the towel by pressing the fire button and pushing the joystick left – of course this makes Alfonso even angrier and he steams towards you at a vast velocity. Just before he reaches you press fire and push the joystick right to make the matador whip the towel away. Such insults enrage the bull further and he stomps after you with renewed ferocity.

Having succesfully goaded the bull in this fashion, a rosette is bunged into the arena which can be picked up and draped (with difficulty) over Alfonso's horns. If this happens you get your name on the winners' poster and have to tackle an even more angry and peeved Alfonso again.

As you can imagine it's not as simple as that and Awesome Alf has some horrible tricks up his sleeve. For a start if you're not quick enough with the towel he may turn and send you bum over breast with a swift flick of his horns, or he may kick as he passes which bowls you over. Once you're down the fun starts – Alf dashes in vengefully and, if you don't get up quickly, stomps all over you which requires a trip to the hospital for treatment and results in the termination of your game. He also sits on you very unprofessionally if he can, which also has fatal consequenses.

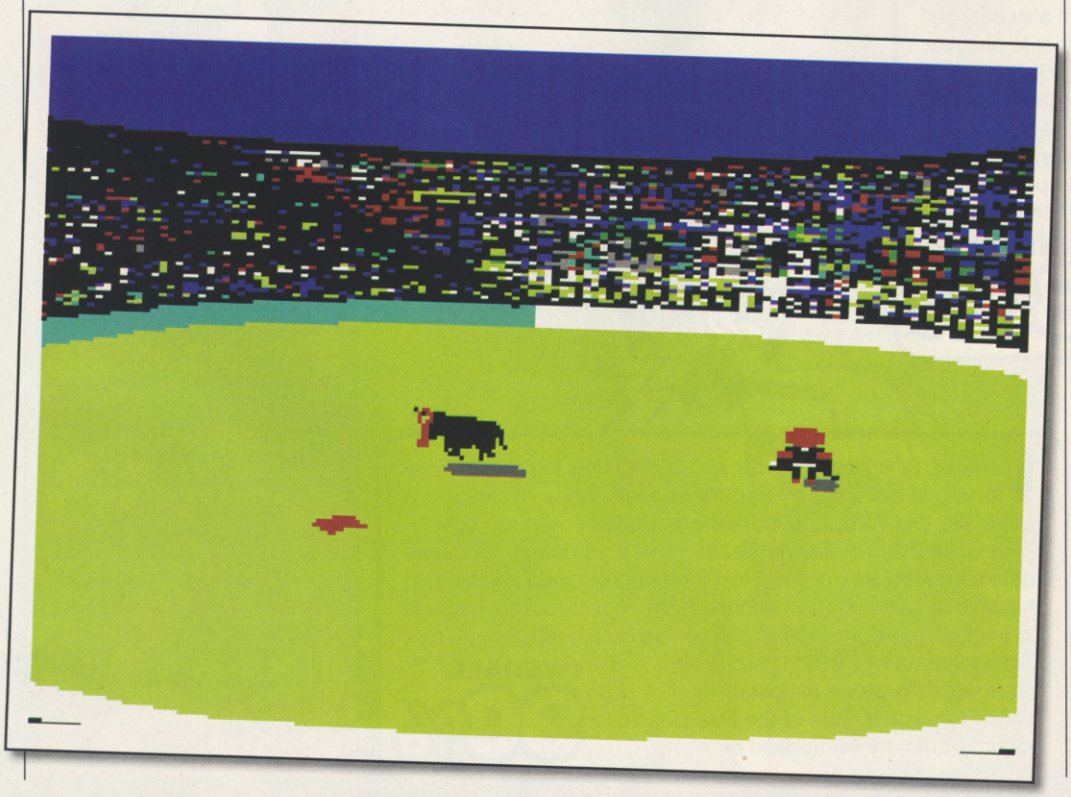
Sometimes when you get thrown you fly up into the air and land on the bull's back giving you the opportunity to ride

Raging Beast is a very daft game indeed. The bull is great and really does have character, something I've never seen in a computer game before. Many a time the air turned blue but such frustration caused me to go back to the game again and again. Love the graphics, adore the gameplay, like the price. Get it.

This is a funny game – everything about it is silly, like the bull trying to stomp you into the dirt and when it does two little stretcher bearers whizz out at speed to wheel you off to El Hospitalo. The graphics, although small, are fine and the bull is portrayed brilliantly. The sound isn't bad either and it all plays very nicely. It's certainly a difficult task mastering the game and the whole package is well worth buying.

Though an incredibly stupid game in every way there's some strange quality about Raging Beast that makes it absolutely excellent to play. It's probably because it is so stupid that the game appeals. The hilarity generated by getting sat upon by a bull is surprisingly large, cries of 'get off me you fat sod' echoed rather loudly around the office when Firebird sent us this one. Graphically, Raging Beast is very good indeed and has some fairly impressive high-res screens sitting resident in memory. Though there are some doubts as to how long the fun will last, Raging Beast is worth the paltry few pennies asked. Firebird do seem to be pulling their act together at the low end of the market, let's hope it continues that way.

it. There's a certain technique to riding the bull and staying on its bucking back for a lengthy period really boosts your score. Throughout the game the kindly El Spikko airlines constantly update your score and write it on the drag flag attached to the back of a tourist packed airliner so you can see it as it hops overhead.



PRESENTATION 91%
Very good indeed. Great title screens and many neat touches.

GRAPHICS 83%
Although simple in appearance, the main characters are very well animated – especially the bull – and work extremely well.

SOUND 81%
Good tunes which suit the game.

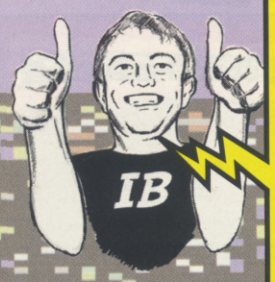
HOOKABILITY 94%
Immediately addictive, mainly due to the hilarious nature of the game.

LASTABILITY 85%
Although the initial humour wears a bit thin after a while, it's still tough and fun to play.

VALUE FOR MONEY 95%
Worth every penny.

OVERALL 89%
A highly entertaining piece of software.

"Dear Commodore User,
Did you read the letters page in the November issue of Zzap!64?
(Who on earth could be bothered to do that? – Ed.)
Commodore User



Leaving aside the dubious moral nature of this game (I'd be the one cheering for the bull!), it's not a bad game and it's certainly original. I don't think Codemasters ever came up with a *Bull Fighting Simulator.* The game is fun to play, although it is quite hard to stay in the ring for any length of time without getting put in hospital by the bull. Moving the matador can be tricky though, as he tends to skid around a lot and doesn't really go to the position you want, by which time you find yourself on the wrong end of the bull's horns. It is a perfect budget game. You can pick it up and have a quick few games without having to wade through pages of instructions. There's no nostalgia in it for me as I never played it before, but it's worth looking at if only for a quick game and laugh.

OVERALL 76%

Jawx certainly went for something different when it came to writing budget games. This bullfighting simulator would cause an outrage if it was released today, and yet it retains a certain charm and innocence, despite the name having to be changed. There's an initial shock at how difficult it is to avoid the bull, but once you learn the moves there's a certain pleasure in strutting your stuff in the sand-covered arena. The animation of the bull and the bullfighter is well done, and there are several little amusing touches – like the stretcher bearers running on to pick up your battered body. It's not the deepest game ever, but it's fun to play for a few minutes at a time. 'Cheap and cheerful' sums it up nicely.

OVERALL 83%

Ah, it seems like only yesterday that I was playing this game! Well, actually, it *was* just yesterday that I was playing this game, so that I could write this review, but *Raging Beast* is a game that leaves an indelible mark from your first go, such is its character. As I'm a coward, being a matador has never been high on my list of 'things to do', so *Raging Beast* was always a great way to live a little dangerously, but in complete safety. It's quite rare to find a game that makes you laugh, but when you've got a sweaty bull sitting on your head, it's hard not to chuckle. Not that humour is the only thing this game has going for it. It's quite a challenge, and facing off against the mighty beast becomes a fair battle of wits. Although slightly overrated, I never once regretted spending two quid on this. Even though the fun eventually wears a bit thin, it's still a game you can fire up for half an hour every once in a while.

OVERALL 83%

I completely agree with the anti-bullfighting lobby who yell "torture is not culture". Funnily enough, while I'd despise a game like *Ole Toro*, I never had any troubles with my conscience while playing *Raging Beast.* That's, of course, because there's no stabbing, cutting, torturing and/or blood involved. In this unique game the bull Alfonso is the real hero. This game is so original, funny and well implemented (and dead cheap), that it's beyond me why it didn't sizzle almost 20 years ago! To prove its lastability: I'm still having fun with it. One of the true classics, but unfortunately overlooked by many.

OVERALL 90%

ZZAP! BACK

PRESENTATION 80%
Builds a good atmosphere – it's all very stylishly done.

GRAPHICS 79%
Sparse, but nicely animated and full of character.

SOUND 74%
Nice tunes and, oh, to hear the roar of the crowd.

HOOKABILITY 88%
Get trampled into the sand and you want to try again.

LASTABILITY 75%
A fun way to kill a couple of minutes.

OVERALL 83%
A relic from a different era, but still a bizarre gaming experience.

"The Review C+VG got wrong.
C+VG's Deputy Editor Paul Boughton gave Gremlin boss Ian Stewart a cake and a bottle of champagne while explaining that their less-than-kind remarks on Gremlin's number one smash, Monty Mole, were "fair comment".
Computer and Video Games
(you wonder why C+VG didn't fold after only a couple of issues)

LABYRINTH

"DOESN'T HE LOOK TIRED AND SAD..."

Labyrinth? I haven't seen one in years. I think. Years... What is 20 years, fellow wizards? I got bored of the rings aeons ago! I rarely play games these days. Only my mind plays tricks on me – mind games, so to speak. But I saw no exit – not North, not South, nor West, nor East. So I went to see the now-so-terribly-famous Gandalf the Grey (the old fool), and all he gave me was a huge bottle of pills to help with my forgetfulness. Or did he? I can't remember. Either way, my useless apprentices didn't stop me from finishing the bottle within a day. Each time I took a pill, I'd forget I'd done so... Useless apprentices! Actually, do I have any apprentices? I forget. Useless!

Almost as useless as Jareth, that half-baked Goblin King, starring in this pathetic excuse for an adventure game, Labyrinth, which my apprentices put in my stiff old fingers. If I didn't know better I'd say this Goblin King would have more chance as one of those singalong pop stars.

I kid you not, fellow wizards! I have never seen this game before in my life, and if I had, I probably wouldn't remember it anyway. My apprentices whisper in my ear that my aged fellow wizard Keith Campbell, of that antique scroll Commodore User, accepted Labyrinth in the 1980s as 'an adventure' for his 'Into the Valley' column, just to have an excuse to play it! Labyrinth ended up in C+VG's adventure section too. What did they know about video games anyway?

Ah, I see: text input is limited to two words, selectable from two scrollable lists. This is a rather tedious process for true adventurers! The only thing I want to enter is "INSULT JARETH", "INSULT JARETH"!

Who's trying to force me into reviewing a joystick-driven fake of an adventure game? Do you really think you can fool ol' Whitey, just because I'm getting older and a little bit forgetful? Be very glad my powers aren't quite what they used to be – otherwise you'd end up in Ranarama for the rest of your pitiful life!

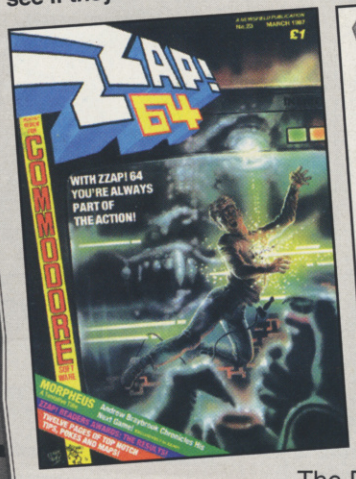
Oh, yes! I'd best leave all this to my worthless apprentices, or else my impeccable reputation will be sullied. Now, where did I put that bottle of pills?

• Jareth the Goblin King, or just a singer in a rock 'n' roll band?

"DOESN'T JAZ LOOK GLAM!"

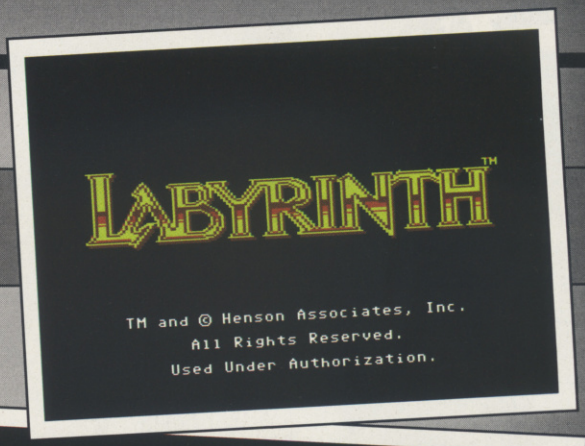
Let's leave ol' Whitey to his 'retirement' and check out the revamped review of Labyrinth, based on the one that appeared in **Zzap!64 issue 23**, from **March 1987**. On page 34, Whitey's 'apprentices' see if they can find the exit... and a good game.

ZZAP! BACK



LABYRINTH

Lucasfilm/Activision £9,95 cass, £14,95 disk, joystick with keys



There you were, sitting in the back row of the movies on a Saturday night, looking forward to a pleasant evening of escape from your own humdrum world into the fantasy and excitement of a new film. But little did you know that tonight really was going to be an escape from the real world...

The film started, and the face of Jareth the Goblin King, appeared. Suddenly the fantasy became reality ... Jareth picked you out from the other cinemagoers, and told you that he had stolen your soul. The only way to get it back is to destroy Jareth in the lair at the centre of the Labyrinth. But if you don't do so within 13 hours, you become his servant, doomed to wander the corridors of the maze forever.

The first part of Labyrinth is a text adventure, in which all comments are entered by means of two text lists at the bottom of the screen. One list contains verbs, the other objects. Words are selected from these lists by using the cursor keys to scroll through them. When a command has been selected, pressing RETURN inputs the phrase, and a response is given.

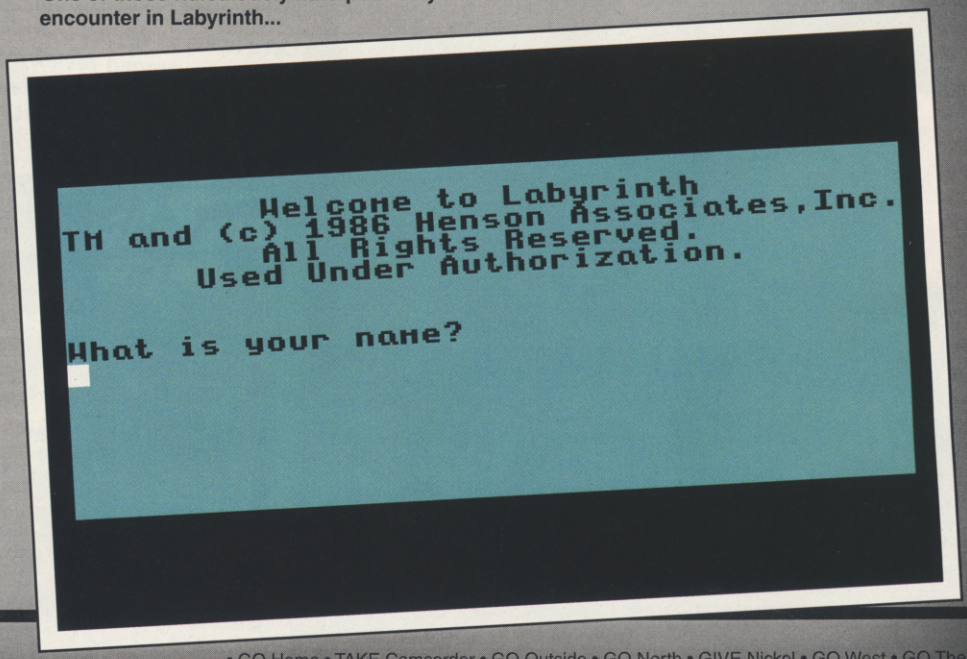
On completing the text adventure, the second part is loaded. Here, the action changes to that of a joystick-controlled arcade adventure. The character under your control is either a boy or a girl, depending on whether you input your sex as male or female at the beginning of the game.

A radar is situated at the bottom of the screen and the shows the position of exits, inanimate and moving objects

• Interactive movies back in 1986?

To start off with, I got a good six hours worth of entertainment out of this. Some of the situations are amusing, and some of the problems are simple but fun to solve – I became so engrossed that I virtually completed it at one marathon sitting... but after that I got bored, and was stuck outside the Goblin's Castle, throwing rocks for what seemed like forever. The characters are superb, large and well animated – but then so they should be as each section is loaded individually ... Which makes me wonder why Activision bothered to put Labyrinth onto cassette – the disk version is slow enough. Recommended though – if you have no objections to paying fifteen quid for a few hours of solid entertainment.

• One of those ridiculously hard puzzles you'll encounter in Labyrinth...



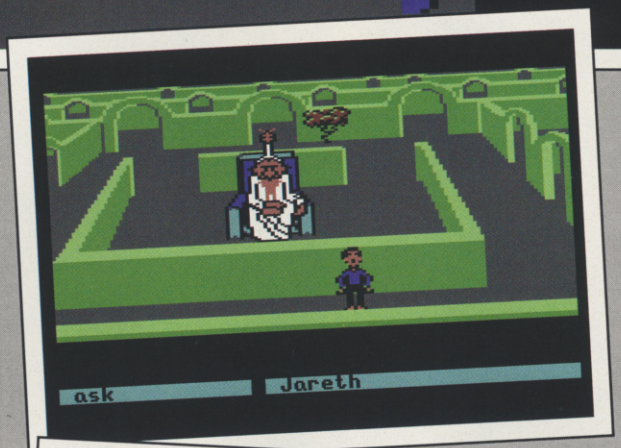
• GO Home • TAKE Camcorder • GO Outside • GO North • GIVE Nickel • GO West • GO Theatre • • GIVE Dollar • GO Theatre • GO North • LOOK • GIVE Dollar • TAKE • COMPLAIN • COMPLAIN • • TAKE • TAKE • GIVE Nickel • GO South • GO South • GIVE Popcorn • COMPLAIN •

• Shake hands, or else!

or creatures – mainly Jareth's goblin guards. Running into a goblin results in a trapdoor opening beneath your feet, and you fall into a dungeon where precious time is lost trying to escape.

The lists of text are retained, and are used throughout to pick up objects and to help solve problems. In all, 22 sections have to be completed before Jareth can be overthrown and your soul reclaimed – and time is short.

This is a real disappointment after such Lucasfilm classics as Ballblazer and Fractalus. Labyrinth is basically a simple arcade adventure which, although fairly original, doesn't really offer much in the way of excitement. Progress through the labyrinth is quite slow, and I found myself getting frustrated with the character's lazy pace – there seems to be too much time spent walking around, and not enough action. The graphics and sound are competent, but it simply isn't difficult enough to keep you playing for long. If you like the sound of the program then give it a try, but I think that you may well be disappointed.



While superficially very flashy, there really isn't much to Labyrinth. I should imagine that tape users would get very frustrated reloading the game every time they make a mistake. The animation of the large central character is smooth – he (or she) is one of the first game stars who doesn't appear to have come straight from the Ministry of Silly Walks. Arcade freaks will soon get bored with the fairly slow pace though, and adventure fans are going to be unimpressed with the limited amount of (fairly simple) problem solving. Lucasfilm have done a lot of good things in the past, so it's a pity to see them not make the grade this time.

Presentation 79%
Almost great, but let down by the laborious multi-load.

Graphics 86%
Excellent cartoon-style drawings and animation.

Sound 60%
Tinny tunes and few simple spot FX.

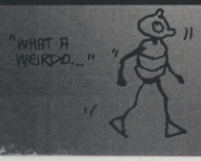
Hookability 79%
Quite compulsive, but only for a few hours.

Lastability 39%
Fun to complete once, but rapidly loses any appeal.

Value 39%
Not enough long-term enjoyment for the price.

Overall 50%
Professional, but lacking any real challenge.

Continues on page 34



"With a game like this, who needs films (or music, or carrot juice)? Roger Kean and joystick take on Jareth in the computer version of LABYRINTH, an animated game of hide-and-seek."
LM, January 1987

LOOK AND LEARN

OLIVER FREY

During the second half of the 1970s, Newsfield's future art supremo Oliver Frey illustrated IPC's educational children's weekly Look and Learn (which ran from 1962 to 1982 – a staggering 1049 issues). On these pages you'll see some of the best and rarest artwork from his pre-Newsfield days.

THALAMUS BOOKS

After Newsfield's demise, Oliver Frey, his brother Franco, and Roger Kean started a new publishing company: Thalamus Books. Still based in Ludlow, and with the help of other ex-Newsfield staff, they publish 'informative and entertaining books on all kinds of subjects' – mostly historical reference books.

Roger Kean announced recently that 'The complete chronicle of the emperors of Rome' (see right), their most recent project, is due to be published in the UK on Thursday, October 6, 2005. Oliver Frey drew countless vintage coins for this book undoubtedly as well as the odd Roman soldier in action. Check it out!

On page 63 of this magazine you'll come across another project, planned for a Spring 2006 release. Surely, fans of Oliver Frey's art cannot wait to get their hands on that one!

• **www.thalamus-books.com**

After the sterling releases that Lucasfilm had made up until this point, it was a big disappointment to sit down and play this movie adaptation. The premise itself (and that of the film) is good; it's just the realisation that is sorely lacking. After negotiating the mind-numbing and fairly trial-and-error 'adventure' section, the proper quest begins. However, counterbalancing all the little touches and interesting situations that you find yourself in, is the fact that there is a copious amount of walking required for very little reward. Most of the puzzles are not that hard to figure out, but those that are not easy are often ridiculously difficult. These factors combine to do their best to suck out any enjoyment you may get from the game. There are no real complaints about the graphics or presentation – they are up to Lucasfilm's usual high standards – but then they should be good given the amount of loading going on. File alongside *Howard the Duck* (preferably on the same roasting tray).

OVERALL 45%

ADVENTURE

This is the missing link between text adventures and the highly successful Lucasfilm point and click games. In fact, you start off in a text adventure, trying to get to see a film. Then Jareth the Goblin King whisks you off into the *Labyrinth*, where you are represented on-screen by a large, well-animated sprite. While it does have its limitations, *Labyrinth* is a fun game to pick up and play and then come back to, thanks to the save game option. Once you've got used to the control method, you can make steady progress. The slow pace and lack of depth (there are only a few hours of gameplay, which does not bode well for repeated play) might put you off, and the original Zzap! review was rather harsh as a consequence. It helps if you have seen the film, but give it a go anyway.

OVERALL 75%

The quirky fantasy movie *Labyrinth* certainly has potential to make a successful transition to the silicon screen. With Lucasfilm Games behind the development of this esoteric action-adventure, it does leave you wondering what exactly went wrong. Technically there are areas where the game is impressive and surprisingly innovative. For instance, *Labyrinth* was one of the first adventures to provide a selectable and context sensitive verb/noun list instead of the standard expectant cursor to help you on your quest. In the game proper the graphics are excellent, with large, cartoony characters and good animation. Your chosen protagonist also scales nicely as you move them in and out of the screen. Unfortunately, the game does not gel and there are too many irksome features dragging it down into mediocrity. There's a lot of uninteresting wandering to put up with before the Goblin King is bested. The verb/noun list proves slow and is bothersome due to some curious selections provided. The non-graphical nature of the mundane world is off-putting. And while the puzzles suit the atmosphere of the movie, they are more often frustrating than fun.

OVERALL 58%

ZZAP! BACK

Presentation 75%
Very professional, but a lot of loading to endure.

Graphics 79%
Large, well-animated characters on unspectacular backgrounds.

Sound 50%
Small, almost apologetic tunes and the odd (quality) sound effect.

Hookability 70%
Once past the 'adventure' section, interest increases.

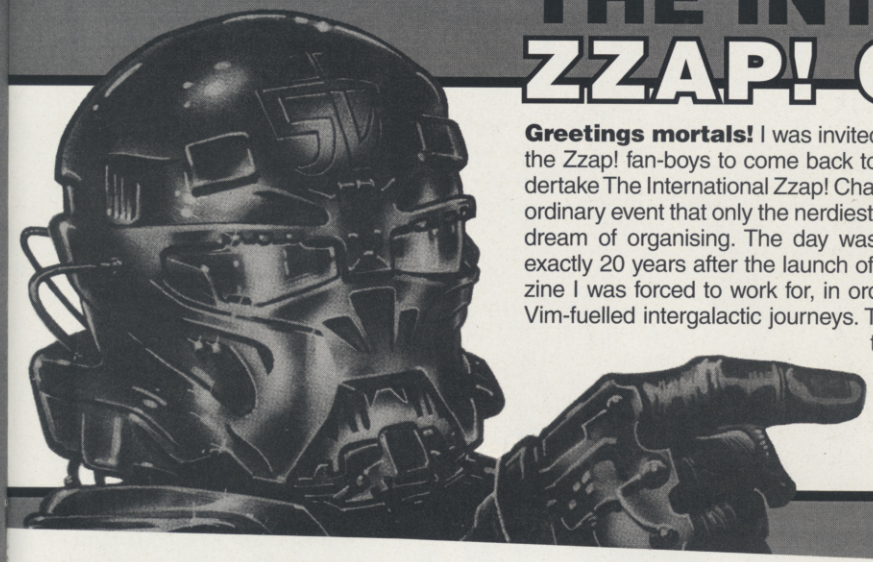
Lastability 55%
However, things can get quite frustrating and there's little incentive to repeat the experience.

Overall 62%
Not bad, but could have been really good if taken in a different direction.

Labyrinth the movie got panned by the critics, although I personally liked it to a certain extent. It's the same story with *Labyrinth* the game: although not the brilliant game we came to expect from Lucasfilm, it has its moments – but then I never had to fork out 15 quid for the privilege of playing it! I even had a corrupt (hacked) version, making it impossible to properly finish the game. I insulted Jareth all the way, but never got to defeat him in the end, unfortunately. Zzap!'s review was a tad harsh, though, because *Labyrinth* is not a boring maze game – it's actually a quite clever mix of varied bits of arcade-y type games and logic puzzles, combined with automated text input. With the game being almost entirely joystick-driven, it was funny to see it end up in the adventure sections of CU and C+VG (receiving rave reviews). It must have had something to do with the wizards finally getting their hands on something 'exciting', while Zzap!'s joystick junkies instead got bored with the game. A year later, Lucasfilm's *Maniac Mansion* wiped the floor with *Labyrinth*, despite some similarities. However, if you like arcade adventures, you could do a lot worse than this game – just make sure you've got a working copy, or you'll curse Jareth forever!

OVERALL 70%

THE INTERNATIONAL ZZAP! CHALLENGE



Greetings mortals! I was invited by the cream of the Zzap! fan-boys to come back to Ludlow and undertake The International Zzap! Challenge – an extraordinary event that only the nerdiest of humans could dream of organising. The day was April 11, 2005, exactly 20 years after the launch of the pitiful magazine I was forced to work for, in order to pay for my Vim-fuelled intergalactic journeys. The idea was pathetic, but since humans need order and a strong hand to organise such an undertaking, and because Houghton still owes me a crate of Domestos, I was lured back. Soon, my craft was in geostationary orbit over Ludlow and I beamed down. I waited for what seemed like an age, but no minions showed. Perhaps their flabby little legs couldn't carry them from their putrid little gaming dens? But then my eyes fell upon one of your primitive 'newspapers', and my circuits almost overloaded with joy as I greedily took in the article in question…

The Scorelord

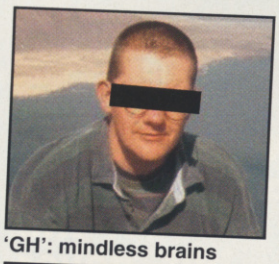
LUDLOW JOURNAL

The Weekend Starts Here -

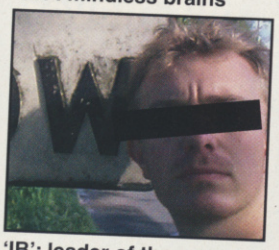
Monday April 11, 2005

15p where sold

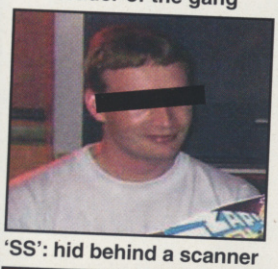
LUDLOW BANK ROBBERY THWARTED



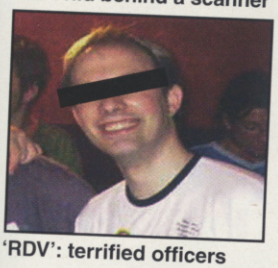
'GH': mindless brains



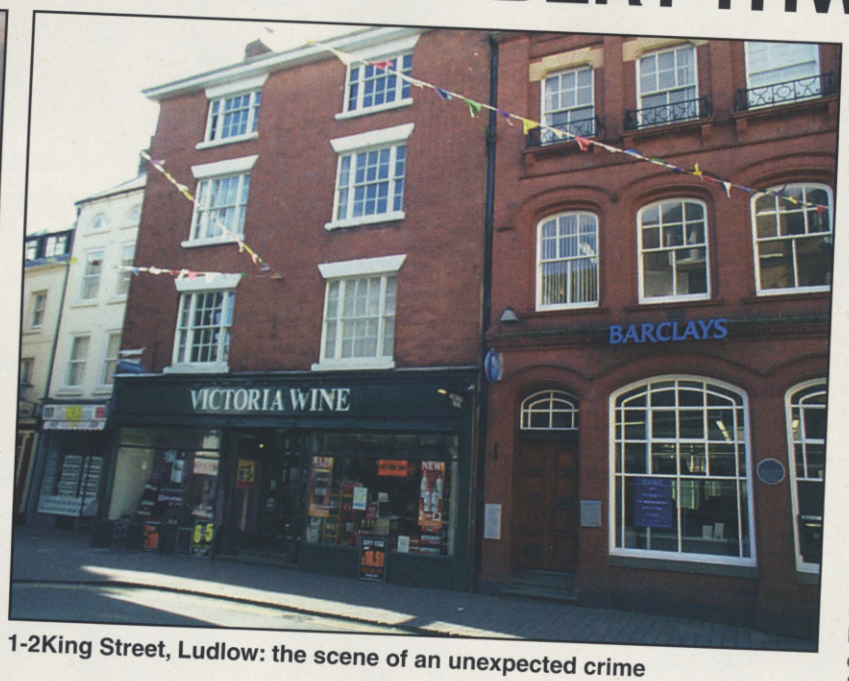
'IB': leader of the gang



'SS': hid behind a scanner



'RDV': terrified officers

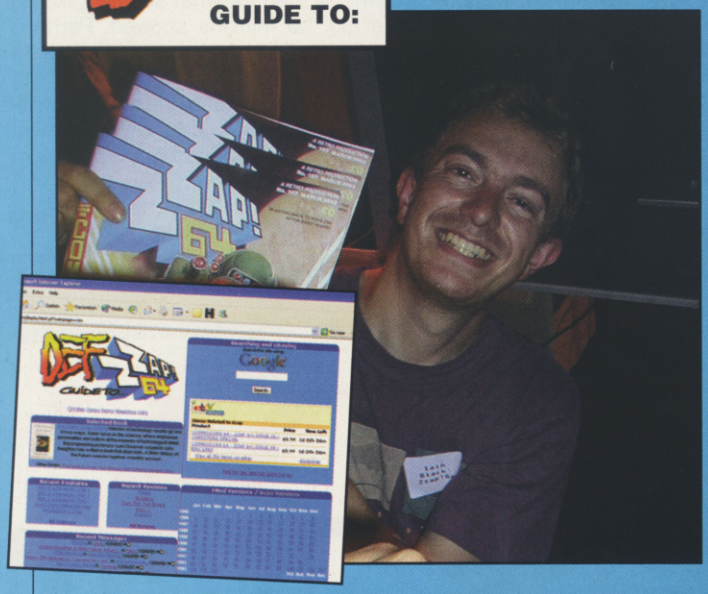


1-2King Street, Ludlow: the scene of an unexpected crime

Today at noon, police in Ludlow thwarted a robbery at Barclays Bank in the town centre of Ludlow. A group of four seemingly unarmed men had entered the building, breaking down the doors to the first floor by using the head of one of the more heavyweight suspects, known as 'GH'. Police arrived when the alarm was triggered, just at the moment the robbers were busy connecting wires to what appeared to be obsolete home computers, presumably in an attempt to use them as timebombs to blow up the door of the bank's safe. The group's leader, 'IB', who is of Irish origin, tried to get away and was later caught after a wild pursuit in which he hit an enormous amount of cars. Bystanders said that it looked like the suspect was hitting the cars for fun as if he was "playing a video game". It took ten policemen to arrest 'GH', a mindless criminal who nonetheless appeared to be the intellectual brains behind the robbery. 'SS' was later discovered hiding behind a scanner when police inspected the rest of the bank. 'RDV', who turned out to be a Dutch petty thief, was wounded by a policeman, who had felt threatened because of what later turned out to be two joysticks in the hands of the suspect. Hearings have started and it seems that more people are involved in this shameless crime. As the gang waited for others to arrive, rambling was heard about "a challenge" like "in the old days". Current theories suggest these men have been active in the criminal circuit for quite some time. Police research resulted in leads that are pointing to what seems like a very well organised international criminal organisation that gathers and exchanges plans on mysterious 'retro' forums on the internet. Bank employees and neighbours are disturbed and very unpleasantly surprised that, for the first time in history, the Barclays Bank branch of Ludlow turned out to be a target for criminal activity of this kind.

LLOYD MANGRAM INSULTS MAYOR

IAIN BLACK



Iain Black (29), webmaster of zzap64.co.uk, is personally responsible for much of the Zzap! revival in the 21st century. We talk to the man who brought Zzap!64 online, and back into the spotlight.

Iain, where do you live and what are you doing at the moment?
I live in Dublin, Ireland, and I'm in the middle of a Masters in Networks and Distributed Systems.

What made Zzap!64 so special to you as a teenager?
Well, it was the first magazine I bought regularly. I loved reading the reviews of all the different games, even if I couldn't afford to buy many of them. It made me feel part of a bigger C64 community. At the beginning I'd rush to the newsagent to get it on the first day it was out!

What was your favourite part of the magazine?
The Rrap. I used to love reading the letters and discussions – Lloyd was my favourite member of Zzap! The features were my next favourite part. Also, when I first started getting the magazine, I used to love the tips section too. My favourite issue is #44: the Christmas special from 1988.

"Zzap!64 made me feel part of a bigger C64 community."

Where did the idea come from to start a website about Zzap!64?
You need to cast your mind back to 1997 – the web was only just getting started. I was in my third year of college and we were given some web space as part of our college accounts. Around the same time, a friend got a scanner, and after we had scanned the odd picture out of Playboy we had borrowed, I decided to head home and get some C64 game covers to scan in and some Zzap!64 issues as well.

I used those images to start my little C64 website, which only had one page devoted to Zzap with a few cover thumbnails on it. I joined the Commodore webring and got other C64 sites to link to my page. It was quite a buzz back then developing a webpage and having people come and visit it. After a couple of months, I think I used to get about 40 hits to my front page every week. Now that figure's grown to over 4000 page views each day!

I got a scanner of my own, and the page started growing. With the scanner came some OCR software, which enabled me to extract the text from some Zzap! features. The thoughts of actually scanning whole issues never really crossed my mind, until I got an email from Demetrius Kiminas saying he had scanned in the first seven issues or so. Obviously I was very interested in getting these but he said he'd only swap them if I scanned in the last seven issues of Zzap. I started scanning them in, but it was a *very* boring job. I think it took about eight months until I had them all scanned in. I believe Mort came on the scene around this time and volunteered to do some scanning. I assumed that he'd lose interest pretty quickly after doing an issue or two. How wrong could I be?

When I started building the site a few years ago, I used to spend a great deal of time on it, but these days, not much, I have to admit. The nostalgia has gone for me since I've been working on Zzap stuff for years now. But every now and then I get more interested in the website and start adding new bits to it. My main motivation is actually page views and positive feedback from people. I guess it's my ego, that I want the site to be more and more popular, but this will only happen if I start to add more content again! Here's hoping!

"I got a letter printed in issue 79..."

Did you have any special 'Zzap!enings' in your life?
I got a letter printed in issue 79, about my thoughts on the C65. They kind of screwed up the meaning of my letter by editing it and Lloyd didn't know what I was talking about (8-bit and 16-bit addressing indeed), but it was a proud moment for me. I can still remember when I got my first Zzap issues as well. I was over in London with my family for our summer holidays and I got the issue in a WHSmith in Waltham Cross, just north of London. It's strange: I can still remember the layout of the shop and the shelf where I picked up that first copy! I read it from cover to cover, got hooked, and, as they say, the rest is history.

Did you ever run into Zzap 'celebrities'?
Well I saw Gary Liddon at Back in Time 2004 in London, although he was rather drunk at the time. He's a decent enough chap, but the feeling wasn't there because he was in Zzap! before my time. I have talked to Gordon Houghton a fair bit over the years but never in person. Since I'm from Ireland, I never attended any of the computer shows where the Zzap! crew would have been at, so I didn't meet any of them back in the day.

"I have talked to Gordon Houghton a fair bit over the years, but never in person."

You visited Ludlow. What did you find there?
It's a beautiful little town with quaint old buildings on the high street and rather impressive castle ruins nearby. After some searching, I managed to find out where the old Zzap! offices were. Now it's an office of a bank so I doubt there's any Zzap! stuff lying around the place. There's still an off licence at the front though, which is where I believe Gordon used to visit quite a lot.

If you published a games magazine today, which ideas would you copy from Zzap!64?
Definitely the idea of more than one person reviewing a game. The almost unique thing about Zzap! and other Newsfield titles was that each review had comments from two or three different people. This gave much more balanced reviews. The Zzap! Challenges were pretty good as well.

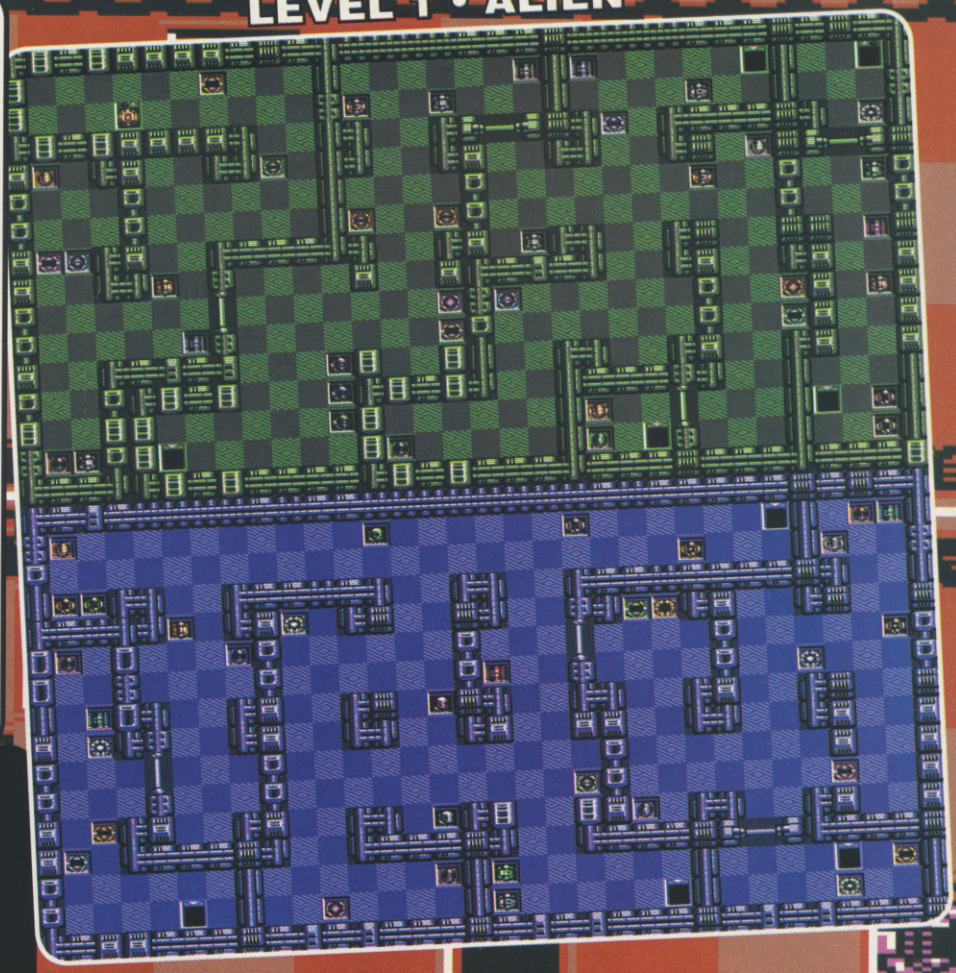
Did you ever come across the 'Zzap! spirit' in later magazines?
In the late 1990s, I used to buy Edge a fair bit, since it had some very interesting articles. After my C64 and Amiga days I lost interest in computer games so I didn't buy any gaming magazines. However, my interest in games is coming back a little, but not enough to make me buy magazines. I much prefer to read the Guardian newspaper with a hot chocolate by my side. I've heard, though, that games™ has a good vibe to it, especially considering it has a retro section.

Do you have any specific Zzap!-related future plans?
Must do better on the website. I have ideas but I'm too lazy to do much about them – especially the *donkey work* part of them...<<

ZZAP! TONI's TIPS

Welcome to Toni's Tips!
I'm Toni Bianchetti; together with Fabrizio Gennari, I represent the Italian Zzap! in this DEF Tribute! Don't expect infinite lives and invulnerability: we want you to complete games with your skills only (well, perhaps with a little help from us). We have an amazing surprise for Martin Walker fans: by using my carefully crafted maps of his masterpiece Citadel, you can enter its deeper levels – with confidence! If you like the maps, get involved by creating a map or walkthrough of your very own. It's rather like building a 10,000-piece jigsaw, but you get to share the results with the rest of the world! Enjoy and... arriverderci!

LEVEL 1 • ALIEN



CITADEL

START

LIFT SHAFT - LINKS SIDES

SWITCH POD - BEAMS ON/OFF

EXIT SHAFT - TO NEXT CITY

ENERGY POD - FULL RECHARGE

WEAPON PODS

BURST FIRING

3 WAY FIRING

2 WAY FIRING

RAPID FIRING

TURRETS

STEPPERGUN - FIRES HOMERS

TURRET GUN - FAST 8 WAY

DIAGUN - 4 WAY STATIC

DOME GUN - 4 WAY STATIC

MOVING UNITS

DESTROYER - 8 WAY FIRING

DROPPER - FIRES HOMERS

AGGRESSOR - 8 WAY FIRING

BLOCKER - 8 WAY FIRING

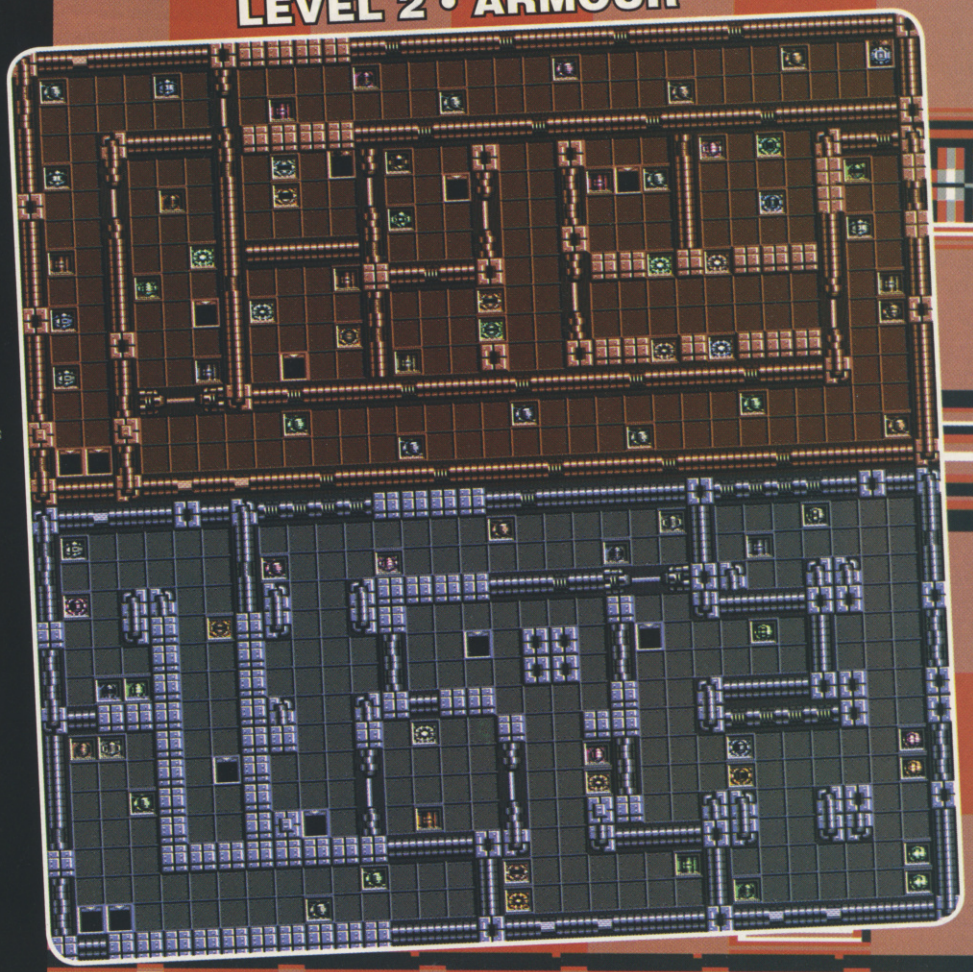
ASSASSIN - ALWAYS RAMS

DIAGONOID - 4 WAY FIRING

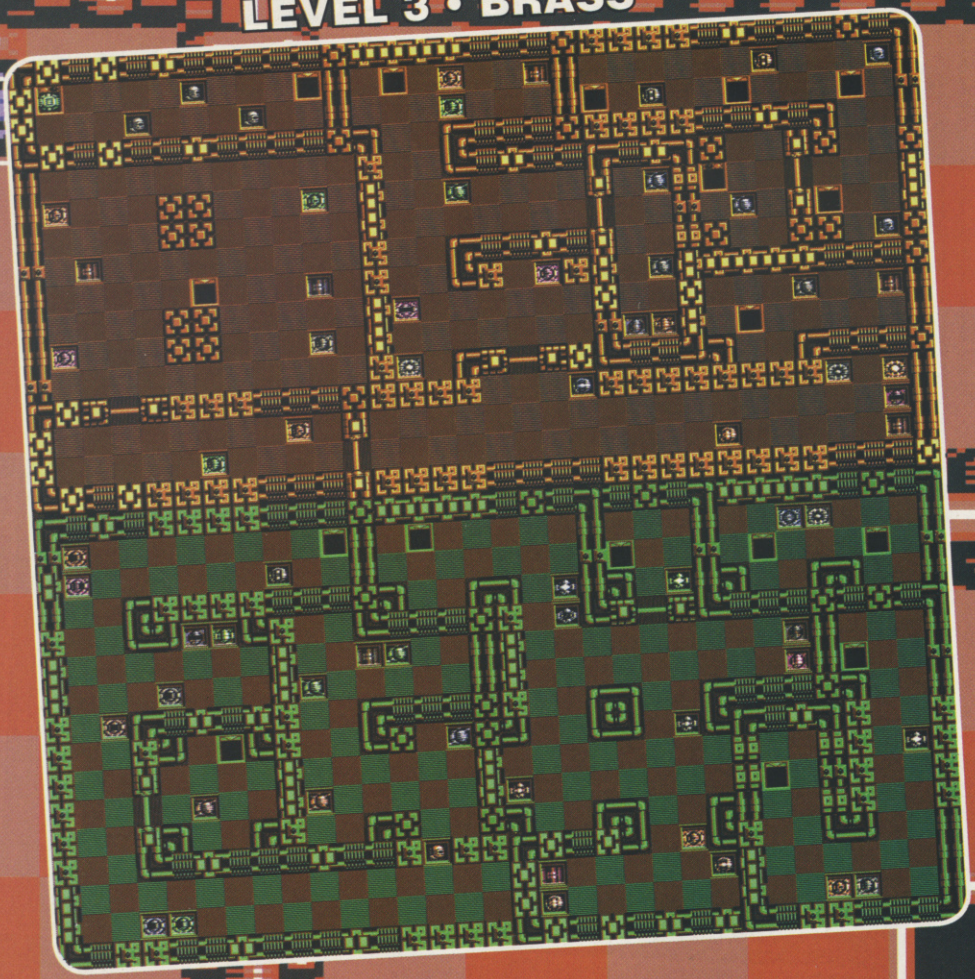
STUNNER - 4 WAY FIRING

WATCHER - HOVERS NEARBY

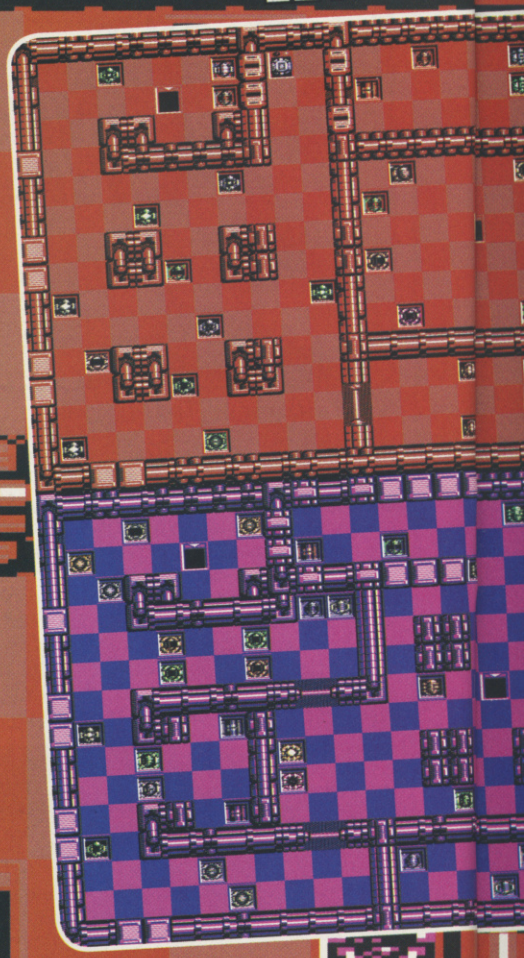
LEVEL 2 • ARMOUR



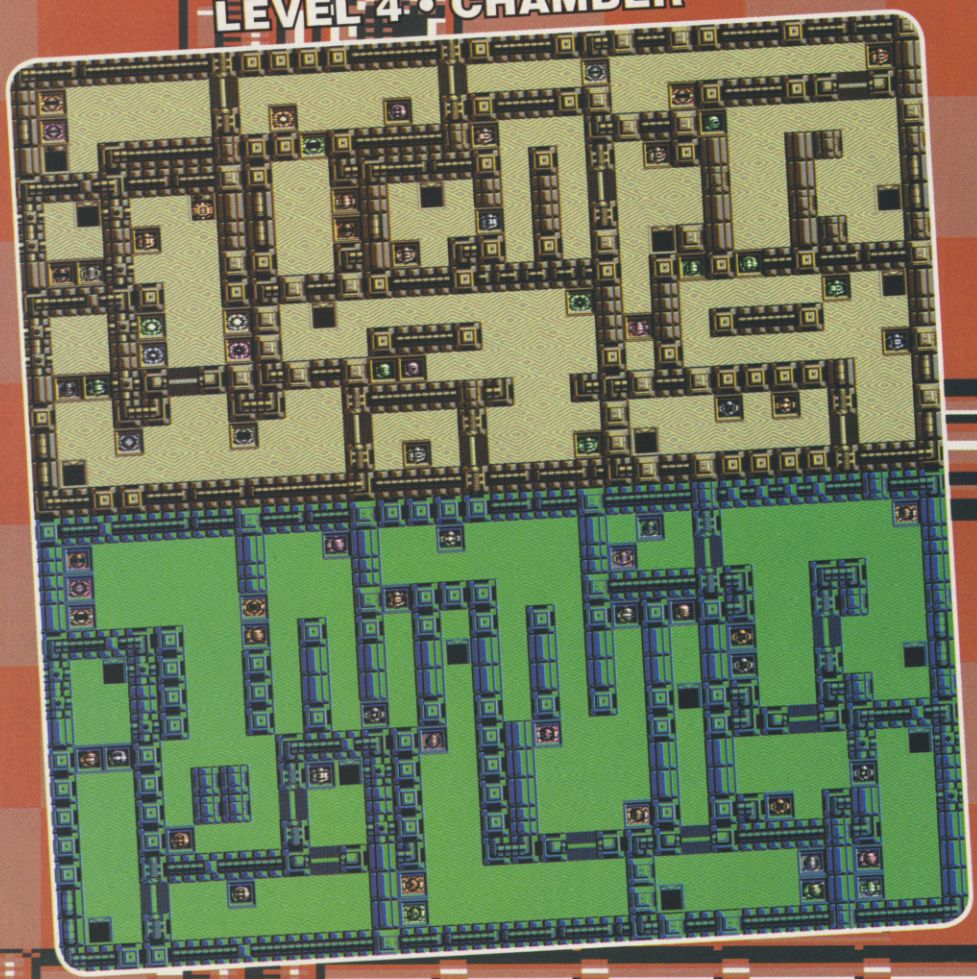
LEVEL 3 • BRASS



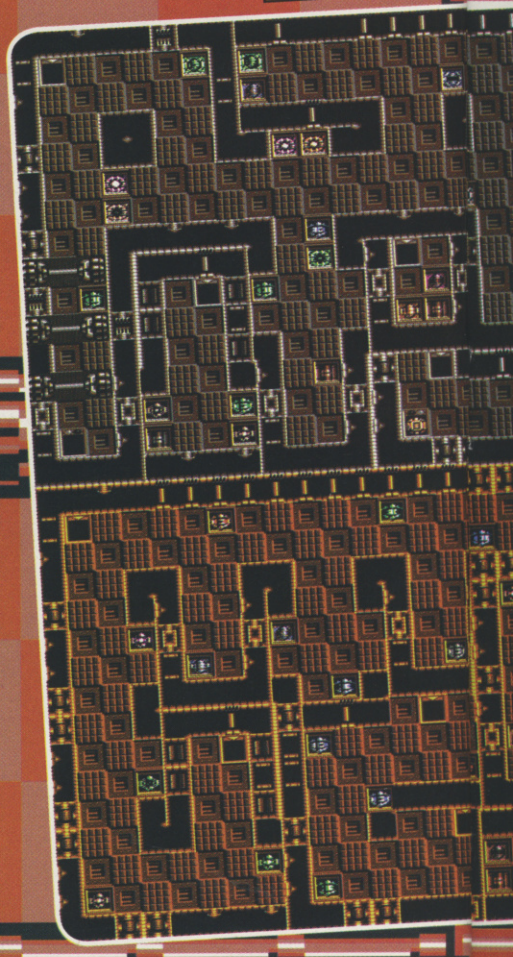
LEVEL 5 A



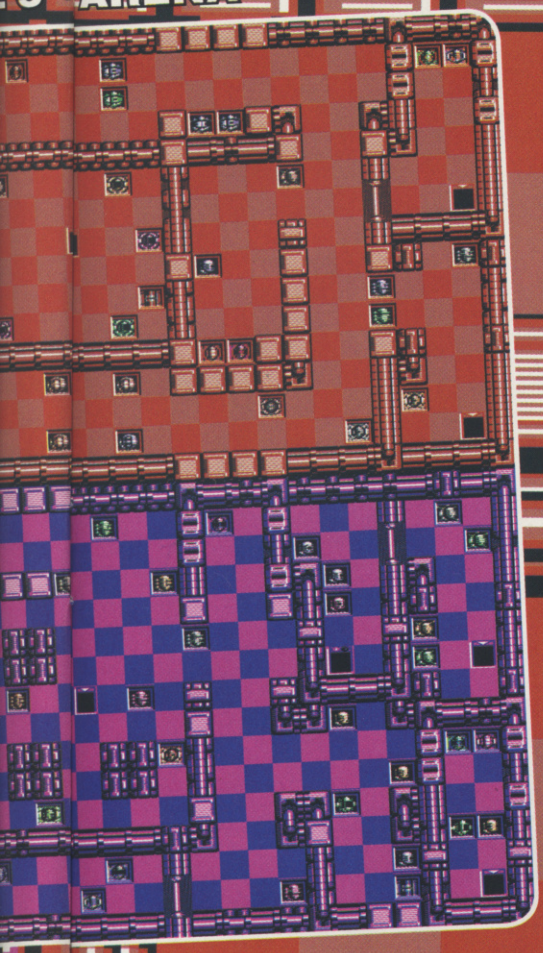
LEVEL 4 • CHAMBER



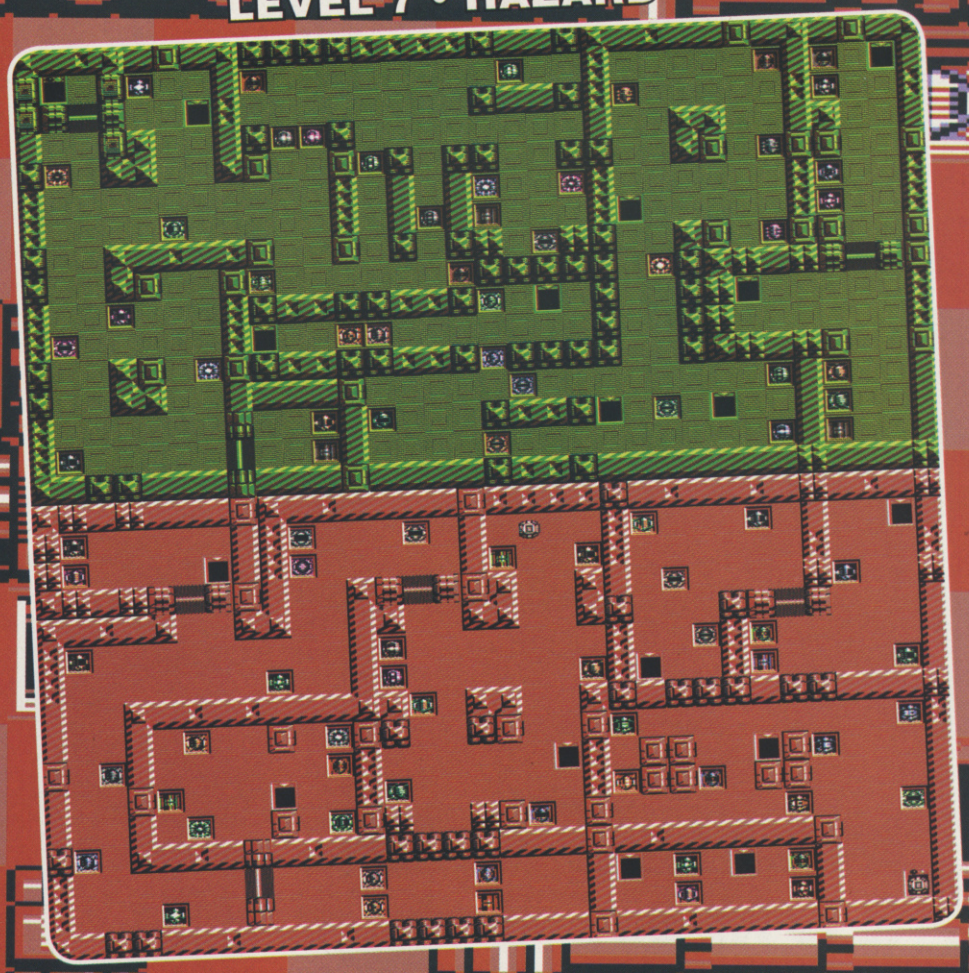
LEVEL 6 V



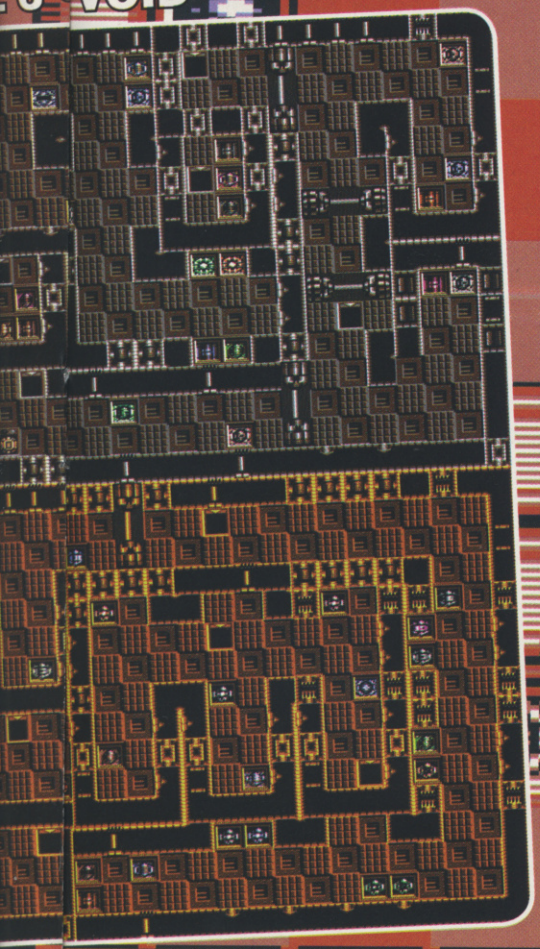
5 • ARENA



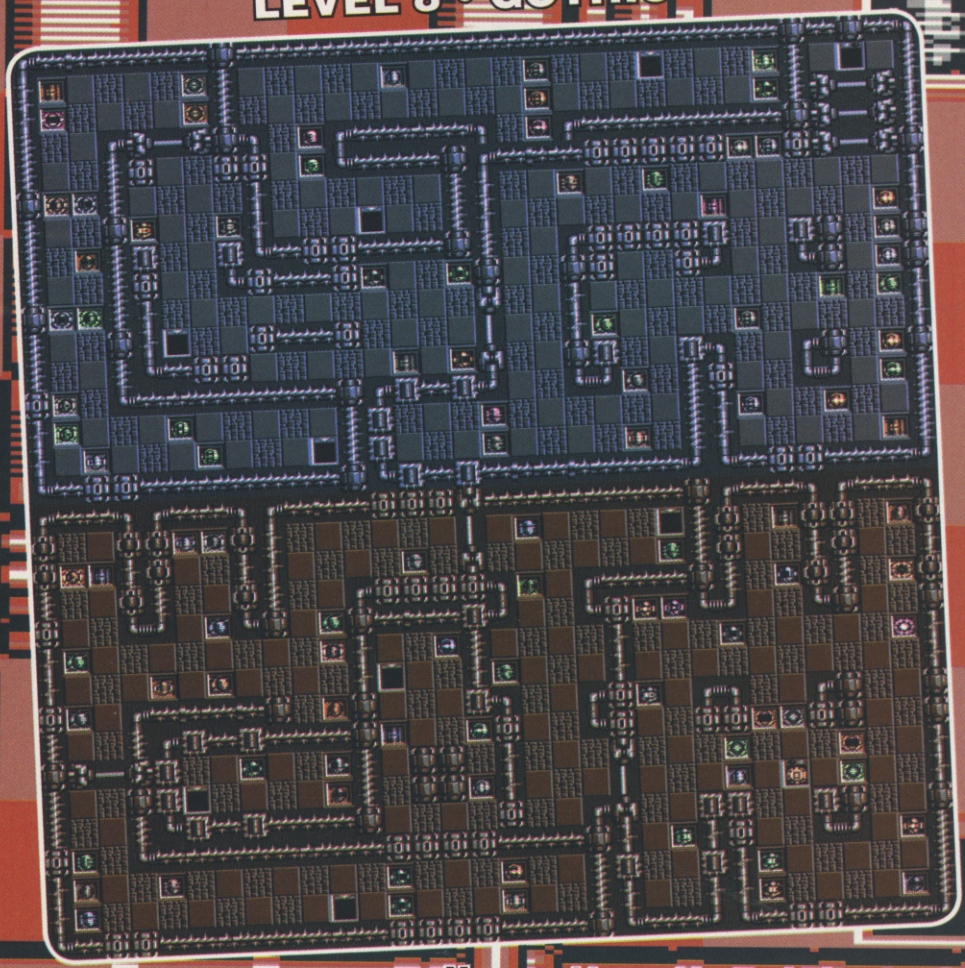
LEVEL 7 • HAZARD



6 • VOID



LEVEL 8 • GOTHIC



Maps and legend by Toni Bianchetti
www.zzap.wide.it/maps.php

WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE SOULS OF MEN...?

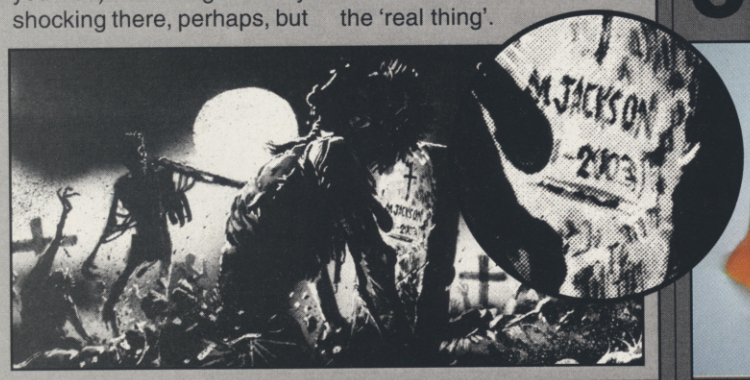
SHADOW SPEC

...THE SHADOW KNOWS!

"WHO NEEDS SHADOWS WITH ME AROUND?"

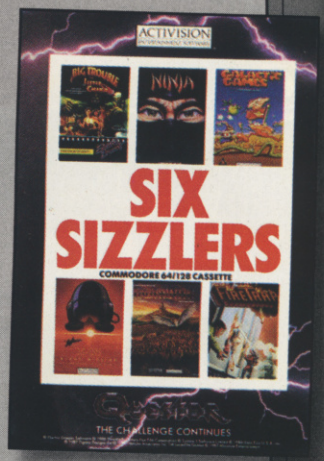
ZOMBIES ATE WACKO JACKO

Remember that horrific Oliver Frey painting of zombies running amok in a graveyard (gulp!), which originally graced the software charts pages? (If you don't, see below.) Examine it closely and you'll discover a possible source of inspiration for Oliver Frey: one of the gravestones clearly says 'M. Jackson', which perhaps references the Michael Jackson promotional video for Thriller, where he dances with zombies and turns into a werewolf (as you do). Nothing terribly shocking there, perhaps, but take another look: the year of death – 2003 – is clearly visible on the stone. In some ways, Oli wasn't too far out – although Jackson looks a little less than 'normal' these days, he's no zombie, but his musical career certainly died a tragic death with 'Invincible' earlier this decade. The Shadow thinks Jackson had better luck in the past with appropriate album titles such as 'Off the wall', 'Dangerous', 'History' and 'Bad'. Invincible? Pah! We know better! And that zombie dude looks even better than the 'real thing'.



SIX SIZZLERS!?

What was Activision thinking, trying to inflict this hopeless compilation on the masses? The Shadow sees everything! Activision had to do something to make this motley collection of games sell, and so it duly decided to sully our prestigious reputation by branding the collection 'Six Sizzlers'. Six? There's only one Sizzler in evidence, Activision, and at least four turkeys! The Shadow is not impressed – these six 'sizzlers' smell!



- Big Trouble In Little China Electric Dreams 34% #26
- The Last Ninja System 3 94% #28
- Galactic Games Activision 43% #34
- Labyrinth Lucas Arts 50% #23
- Firetrap Electric Dreams 74% #34
- X-15 Alpha Mission Activision 46% #32

OH, SWEET ZZAP!

The Shadow was pleasantly surprised when he recently opened one of Red Band's bags of mixed wine gums. It contained huge, mouth-watering candy with 'ZZAP' written all over them. The Shadow says to rush out and buy some now, because Zzap! never tasted so sweet.

Red Band

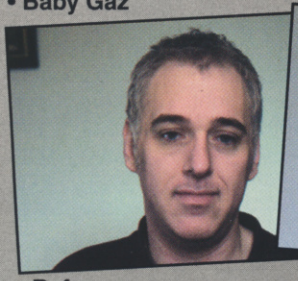
"We don't glorify violence, we merely illustrate games. Zzap! always goes for gross covers, check their October (1986) issue (but don't buy it)."
Commodore User

EGO CORNER

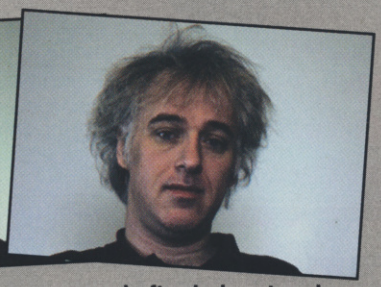
Due to Gary Liddon being unable to support this DEF Tribute in a substantial manner (he was probably busy lobbying Microsoft about a certain Jeff Minter), The Shadow, in his infinite wisdom, decided to make the Ego Corner Gary's domain once again. Mr. Techno Teaboy (or 'Gravy' to his friends) is one of the few members of the 'old gang' crazy enough to mix with the fan-boys. Documentary evidence is therefore plentiful and ripe for (ab)use! (Cue: diabolical laughter!)

• Baby Gaz

• The tale about a Speccy and a baseball bat...



• Before...



...and after hair extensions

• Confusing the fanboys

• Kicking back, doing the gardening

• The truth behind the Neon origins, The Shadow knows...

FASCIST GAMES

With Epyx cornering the market with Summer Games, Winter Games and World Games, what was left for Tynesoft when the company wanted to release its own sports sim? After some undoubtedly lacklustre brainstorming sessions, they came up with European Games. The company also discovered an artist willing to create suitable imagery to support the game. The Shadow knows all, but still hasn't decided whether the sporting hero gracing the advert (which was published in early 1987) is just waving to his mum on the television, or whether he's harking back to some rather less joyous 'European games' of old. What The Shadow does know is that just two months later, the advert was adjusted ('new: now less offensive to Europeans!'), and the game was eventually condemned to existence on some second-rate MicroValue compilation.

CULT OF ZZAP

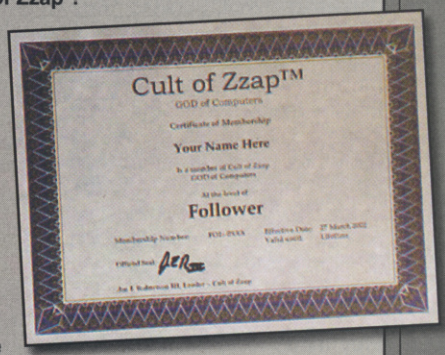
The Shadow found out about 'The Cult of Zzap' a while ago. Who dares to abuse Zzap!'s good name and turn it into a silly fake cult?! WEIRDOS! However, even The Shadow has to admit he was amused (a bit) by some of the *rules* found in the 'beliefs' section of the site:

"The purposes of the Cult of Zzap™ are:

1. Sell memberships and logo merchandise.
2. Pay homage to and thereby gain the favor of Zzap - GOD of computers.
3. Inform the world about Zzap.
4. Pray to never hear the sound 'Zzap' while computing, as 'Zzap, GOD of computers' only speaks in anger.
5. Make the leader rich.

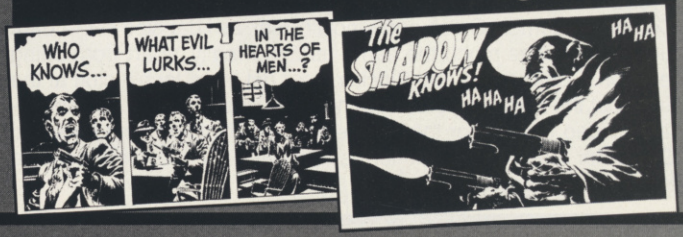
How do I gain the favor of Zzap ?
Purchase an item from our selection of gifts. Both the buyer and/or receiver will be smiled upon by Zzap. This will result in a 27% less chance that Zzap will visit the owner of the gift. Zzap is an angry god and announces his visit by having a machine speak his name: 'Zzap'. This is usually followed by release of 'magic smoke' from inside the machine."

• www.cult-of-zzap.org



• The Cult of Zzap membership certificate you can order

Truth seekers gather....



"It's nice to know your work is appreciated, but I curl up when people praise me to my face"
Oliver Frey

I ALREADY HAVE A CULT FOLLOWING

STEPHEN STUTTARD (a.k.a. Mort): The Scan King

Stephen Stuttard (34), known to most people on the web as Mort, is the man who brought us digitized Zzap!64. He's the 'scan king' of zzap64.co.uk, and he has personally scanned in over 10,000 pages of Zzap! Clearly, the guy is not human. Instead of going to a mental hospital, he continued scanning. He did Crash, The Games Machine, Amtix, Sinclair User, Your Sinclair, Commodore User, Commodore Format plus the first ten years of Computer & Video Games. We wonder what's next...

Hi, Stephen. Where do you live and what do you do to support yourself at the moment?
I live in Kent, and I'm a minion at British Telecom.

What made Zzap!64 so special to you as a teenager?
For starters, the reviews were unbiased. Well, unless Bob Wade was reviewing Elite, or Gary Penn was reviewing a simulator! I also had the feeling that the reviewers had the same ideas about games as we did (that they were fun rather than just the latest licence). And the magazine had a nice enthusiastic bent rather than feeling too corporate. My favourite parts of the mag were the tips section (especially when great Oliver Frey maps were included) and the celebrity interviews.The diary of a game was brilliant too.

"...the reviews were unbiased. Well, unless Bob Wade was reviewing Elite, or Gary Penn was reviewing a simulator!"

Did you read other magazines back in those days? If so, how did they compare?
I read Commodore User, Computer & Video Games, Personal Computer Games, Crash and Sinclair User, as I dabbled in the 'dark side'. Crash was much the same as Zzap really, apart from being less fun. Commodore and Sinclair User did more techie stuff at the time, but the reviewing side of things was poor. I picked up Computer & Video Games for the terrible type-ins! Nothing beat Personal Computer Games for multi-format reviews – before the magazine folded, of course.

What was the most memorable 'Zzappening' in your life?
Getting the new issue as it arrived at the newsagents! Working on Zzap!64 issue 107 was excellent.

Have you ever encountered a Zzap! 'celebrity' in the past?
I met the original Zzap crew at the 1986 PCW show. And I got great feedback from Gary Liddon, a top bloke, for the scan set I gave him. I also met Jeff Minter at some of the Back in Time events.

"I did not realise I would still be scanning five years later!"

When did you decide to start scanning in Zzap!64?
When I found out no-one else had done it. And I also thought it would be a great online resource – that is until the bandwidth got gobbled up and I had to start burning CDs and DVDs! At the start I did not realise I would still be scanning five years later, though! Ha!

"...and the nifty Oliver Frey artwork on the cover..."

What is your scanning schedule?
For the last four years, I did about one issue every night. Therefore, I spent about three hours scanning every evening, or in the morning before going to work. I killed eleven scanners in the process though.

Are you still *reading* magazines today?
Yep: games™, Retro Gamer (respect due!) and PC Gamer.

If you were publishing a games magazine today, which ideas would you copy from Zzap!64?
The Challenge and the nifty Oliver Frey artwork on the cover.

Did you ever come across the true 'Zzap! spirit' in a magazine?
I'm thinking of Retro Gamer as they really seem enthusiastic about what they write.

Do you have any specific Zzap!-related wishes?
Yeah: to get a time machine and appear in Ludlow in early 1985 and apply for a reviewing post. I also would love to see a get together of all the original reviewers for a Zzap lookback and get Oliver Frey to finally finish the Terminal Man! <<

• Stephen Stuttard gets the thumbs up from Gary Liddon

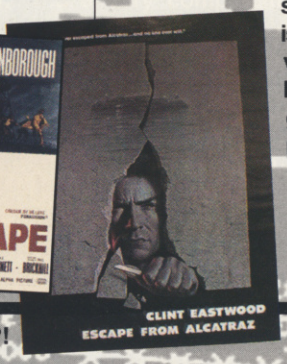
THE GREAT ESCAPE

The alarm rings out. Powerful searchlights sweep the grounds, seeking out any sign of movement from within the camp. Guards and their dogs close in while you feverishly attempt to cut through the fence using a pair of rusty wire-cutters.

But who are you, who is the enemy, and where are you escaping from? This may seem a daft question, but is not as weird as you may think. Of course, you must be aware that The Great Escape is loosely based on the film of the same name, with you taking on the role of a prisoner trying to escape from a German camp. Oh, and the guys with the dogs are Nazis.

The thing is, if you played this game in Germany when it was originally released, you'd have instead loaded up the simply titled 'Escape'. So, why did this happen? During the 1980s, the German authorities created a list of games that were banned because they were too violent or featured German military action in World War II scenarios. Even the UK magazine Computer and Video Games was banned for promoting those games by advertising and reviewing them. (Of course, C+VG should have been banned anyway – Ed.) We guess Zzap!64 never again made it to German shelves after issue 2's cover. Anyway, how was the game's scenario altered for the German release?

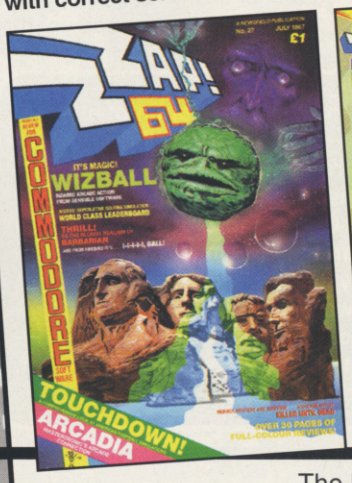
Instead of a hero, you are "caught, convicted and condemned to a life sentence in America's most remote and tightly guarded prison: a former fortress from the American civil war, perched high on a volcanic outflow overlooking a vast plain." The question is, which of these is more morally offensive: playing a game set in World War II that helps a prisoner escape from a high-security Nazi camp, or one where you assist a convicted criminal serving a life sentence to get off scot-free? You decide...



• Just escape, OK?!

Escape with us back to **Zzap!64 issue 27**, from **July 1987**. Risking 20 years in solitary, we present the original review, updated and restyled in trendy black and white, this time with correct screenshots!

ZZAP! BACK



THE GREAT ESCAPE

Ocean, £8,95 cass, joystick or keys

There have been many books and films telling of the successes and failures of escape attempts from German high-security POW camps throughout World War II. Ocean have now released a computer program which allows a player to step into the army boots of a prisoner of war imprisoned in Germany's most secure camp.

The date is 1942, and the recently arrived hero is appalled to find that all the prisoners have fallen into a state of complete apathy. Their morale has been crushed by several failed escape attempts, and all they do now is follow a strict routine of sleeping, eating and attending role calls, waiting for the end of the war. Our hero is still full of enthusiasm though, and has decided to make a break for freedom – with or without the help of the other inmates.

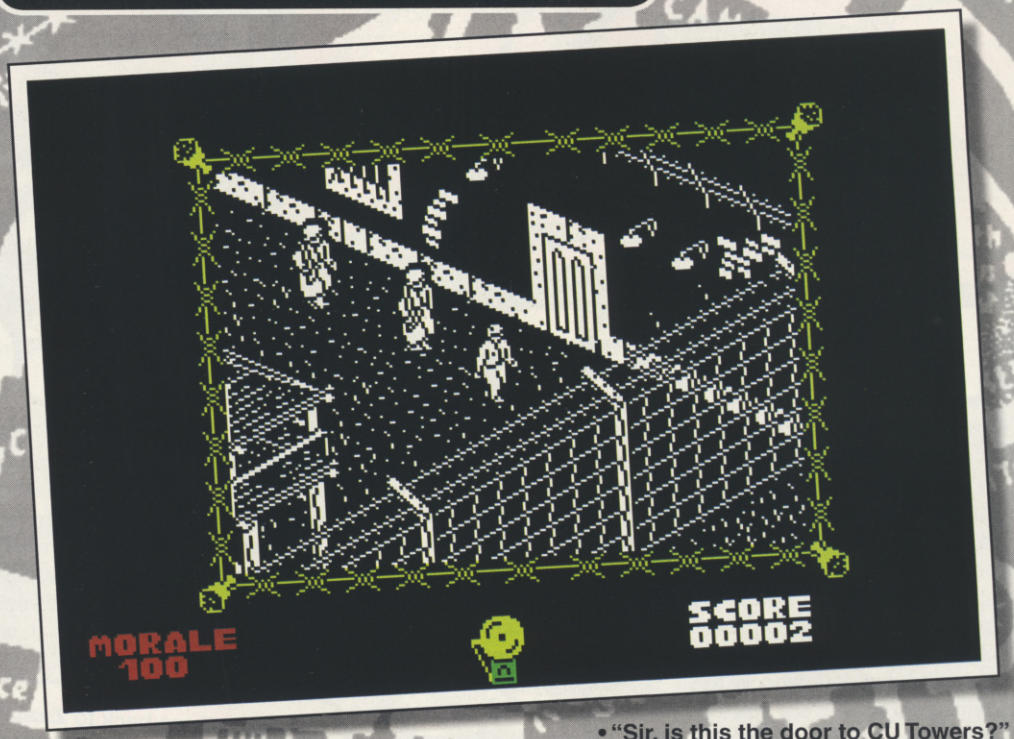
The camp is situated in a converted castle, positioned on a cold North Sea peninsula. The only access is through the main gate, and official papers are required to authorize safe passage. All activity is monitored by guards in the watchtowers, and powerful searchlights sweep back and forth throughout the night. Prisoners are housed in the centre of the complex, only leaving their cells to exercise in an area adjacent to the main gate.

Against all these odds, escape seems a daunting prospect – but there is a positive side. The guards follow a rigid timetable, and their movements can be monitored and predicted. A maze of drains and tunnels used during previous escape attempts crisscrosses beneath the castle, and a range of useful objects can be picked up from around the castle – keys, torches, wire-cutters, shovels and dynamite to name but five.

Abandoning control of the prisoner allows him to follow the strict German routine – useful to bide time while an escape plan is formulated, or to monitor the behaviour of the guards.

The action is displayed through a remote forced 3D perspective, with flick-screen indoor locations and multi-directional scrolling castle grounds. Information display-

What an incredible piece of programming! A complete POW camp has been crammed into the Commodore, right down to the very last detail. The prison and surroundings have been extremely well planned, and the research which must have gone into the production of the program is admirable. It's a shame this depth of design isn't incorporated into more programs. What makes The Great Escape so special is the phenomenal amount of freedom the player is given within the game environment. That, coupled with the many different escape possibilities gives the player scope for months of varied and interesting play. Unquestionably the best arcade adventure so far this year – don't miss it.



• "Sir, is this the door to CU Towers?"

The programmers have made a brave attempt at a large scrolling play area – sadly the scrolling doesn't meet the same high standard as the gameplay. The Great Escape contains some of the most detailed and attractive graphics I've seen on the Commodore, it just seems a pity that the secreen play area is so small. The sound effects do their job admirably, but the game lacks a decent melody to add to the very weak atmosphere. The presentation could have been made stronger, as there's absolutely no front end. Still, all the problems are very logical, fairly simple to solve ... and great fun.

• "What, no happy meal?"

• "Escape? Can't you see we're trying to get some sleep here?"

Ocean have achieved a very competent conversion from the original Spectrum program, considering that the 64 doesn't really like 3D perspective games. The camp is highly detailed and there are loads of guards and POWs wandering around to add to the atmosphere. A really nice touch is the ability to enter tunnels and scramble around under the ground. My only niggle is the slow speed of action, but this is still faster then most games of this type. If you fancy a bit of WW II action from the other side of the fence, then look no further than The Great Escape.

ed at the bottom of the screen comprises of a numerical representation of the hero's morale, an alarm bell and a text readout area, which displays German orders. Failing to comply with these orders (roll call, meal times and so on) results in the hero being chased by guards, and a spell in solitary confinement if he's captured. Capture also causes the loss of any collected equipment along with a loss of morale. Should morale sink to zero, the potential escapee becomes an insipid model prisoner like the rest of the inmates – but that's not going to happen, is it?

PRESENTATION 90%
Good instructions, and many highly effective touches throughout, such as being able to let the prisoner do his own thing.

GRAPHICS 81%
The detailed 3D graphics generate a suitable atmosphere, marginally tainted by the juddery scrolling and absence of colour.

SOUND 22%
A few bells and whistles add some atmosphere to an otherwise silent game.

HOOKABILITY 88%
Instantly absorbing and interactive action as soon as the prisoner leaves his bed.

LASTABILITY 88%
A complete POW environment to be monitored, many objects to find and locations to explore – just to find one escape route!

VALUE 87%
Weeks of play on offer for nine quid.

OVERALL 89%
One of the best arcade adventures available – an essential purchase for fans of the genre.

"We tend to do a lot of research into our games. You get more into it if you do. For The Great Escape I watched the Colditz series, and went out and bought a load of military models."
Ally Noble, Denton Designs

SIZZLER

I have many fond memories of this game, having completed it within a week of release on the Speccy. This was the first stealth game I came across, coming out ten years before the likes of Thief and Splinter Cell. The atmosphere generated by the black and white graphics is intense, harking back to the war movies of the 1940s and 1950s. Gameplay is fantastic for a game of its age, with logical puzzles, such as: getting a torch to see within the hidden escape tunnel; poisoning the guard dogs (sorry Rolf!); and multiple endings, determined by the items you use to escape – all of which provides great replay value. The atmosphere is especially tense when you go exploring the prison camp at night, avoiding the searchlights, trying to evade capture by the guards when spotted. This fantastic game still stands proud, even alongside more modern efforts (such as: *The Great Escape*, based on the film, and *Prisoner of War*). Give it a try – you won't escape for a while!

OVERALL 89%

This game came as a real surprise back in the day, and I remember actually preferring it to *Head Over Heels*, which was one of the few other games played in a similar perspective at the time. The concept of *The Great Escape* was unique, though, and being trapped in a World War II concentration camp was a really tense experience. Playing it again brought back all of that tension, and then some. Choosing the right moment to try and slip away from the guards, in order to put another piece of your escape plan into action, brought me out in a cold sweat every time. The fear of being caught hangs over you at every moment, giving this game a different dimension to pretty much any other you could name. The unique premise and solid execution mean that *The Great Escape* is a game that should have Sizzled.

OVERALL 90%

The isometric 3D graphics conjure up a real feeling of being confined to the camp, and the variety of objects is excellent. The first few games can be frustrating, but the atmospheric graphics keep you coming back. It's a real shame the sequel, *Where Time Stood Still*, never made it to the Commodore 64. Oh, and there's no Steve McQueen or his motorbike – just plenty of German guards, barbed wire and guard dogs standing between you and freedom. A Denton Designs classic.

OVERALL 90%

The fact that *The Great Escape* missed Sizzler status (and by just a single per cent) is baffling, to say the least. I've rarely seen a more intense and atmospheric arcade adventure than this game. Today, it even wipes the floor with its PS2/Xbox namesake. The adrenaline rush you get when attempting a well-planned escape (with alarms ringing and guards chasing after you) is incomparable. *The Great Escape* was eventually awarded a Silver Medal when re-released on budget, but I'm glad we can finally fully do the game justice 18 years after its original review, by awarding it the Sizzler it so richly deserved. Forget the juddery scrolling and monochromatic graphics – this unique game is an ode to Denton Designs' excellent innovative concepts.

OVERALL 91%

ZZAP! BACK

Presentation 90%
Status messages and the ringing bell help you keep track of what's going on.

Graphics 80%
Monochromatic, but detailed and very atmospheric.

Sound 40%
Music would ruin the atmosphere that's essential to this game. The few effects are all that's needed.

Hookability 85%
A little overwhelming at first, but the urge to break free is strong.

Lastability 93%
Involving gameplay keeps you tied to the computer. Once you start to explore, there's no escaping...

Overall 90%
An unusual and highly rewarding game, still worthy of anyone's attention.

"In Zzap!, most of the review is spent on the plot, and even worse you have the reviewers giving comments! I find that very stupid because different people have different views on games."
A Commodore User Star Letter

OVER RATED UNDER RATED

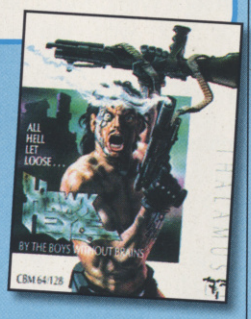
Zzap!64 is always right! Right? Wrong! Although the unique method of reviewing makes it difficult for major mistakes to occur, even Zzap! slipped up a few times. Mat Allen dug up some questionable judgments and offered his own take on things...

Elite

Issue 1, May 1985
Original score: 95% 'Gold Medal'

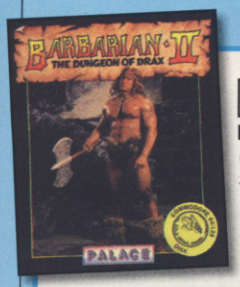
Even the most hardened Elite fan would admit that the C64 version of the space trading classic was over-rated. It's not the style, content or idea that's in question, but the execution of the game. The poor old C64 just isn't up to doing vector graphics (although some would argue that Mercenary proves otherwise), and much of the atmosphere of Elite is lost as dogfights almost grind to a halt as the C64 struggles to keep the frame-rate up when there's a lot going on. Then there's the problem with docking: until you get a docking computer, prepare for death by space station! With better coding, the Gold Medal would have been deserved; as it stands, though, a mark of 80% or so would have been more realistic.

Hawkeye



Issue 40, August 1988
Original score: 96% 'Gold Medal'

Was there 'pressure from above' to award this Thalamus game Zzap!'s highest accolade? It's quite possible – even ex-editor Gordon Houghton has hinted as much – that someone from Thalamus was hassling him to do so. To be fair, it's not like this run-and-gun game in the style of Rygar is bad – in fact, it has plenty going for it: Hawkeye looks and sounds great, and the platform action requires skill – for instance, figuring out which weapons most effectively dispense with enemies takes practice. Also, hardcore gamers can try getting huge bonuses by making little use of the more powerful weapons when completing levels. Despite this, the gameplay changes little over Hawkeye's 12 levels, and while it perhaps should have Sizzled, the Gold Medal was surely a case of the game being over-hyped.



Barbarian 2

Issue 40, August 1988
Original score: 96% 'Gold Medal'

Take one well-received one-on-one fighting game, introduce some exploration and simple puzzle solving, but reduce the fighting moves to a basic subset, then watch as Zzap! inexplicably dishes out a Gold Medal... Sorry guys, but you got this one horribly wrong! Graphically, the game is remarkable, and you wonder whether that swayed opinions somewhat (a complaint you can level at many reviewers today). However, it was the fighting that made the prequel; here, though, the fighters have only four offensive moves, and one is usually enough to see off opponents. The fact that this makes the game become a little tedious suggests that, even back in 1988, a mark in the 70s would have been more suitable.

Auf Wiedersehen Monty

Issue 26, June 1987
Original score: 46%

After dishing out praise to the acclaimed Monty on the Run, Zzap! surprisingly attacked the sequel with venom, awarding it a miserly 46%. Even though it's true that this game isn't as good as its prequel, it was nonetheless deserving of a higher mark. Unlike the original, Auf... is a lot more open-ended, offering choice as to how the player progresses and in how to solve the game's tricky puzzles (which are challenging enough to get even seasoned gamers chomping on their joysticks). Oddly, the original review was even highly critical of the music, despite the theme being almost as good as Hubbard's effort for Monty on the Run. (What?! -Ed.) Maybe the reviewers suddenly had a newfound disrespect for moles, and it's clear that a score of around 70% would have been more fitting.

Laser Squad

Issue 53, September 1989
Original score: 83%

Even though strategy geek Robin Hogg looked at this game, it wasn't appreciated as much as it should have been. Taking the best parts of Chaos and Rebelstar Raiders, Julian Gollop fashioned a game that has since had few equals. This is due to the fabulous combination of presentation, attention to detail, rules, environment and mission settings. The AI of the computer is varied and unpredictable enough to be thoroughly worth practicing against, but the real meat of the game is in facing off against a human opponent. It is quite simply one of the greatest two-player games, even – that's assuming, of course, that you are of a 'thinking bent' and not an 'arcade junkie'! This should have Sizzled at the very least.<<

ZZAP! BACK ...TRAZ

We're breaking out with Zzap!64 issue 36, from April 1988. You find two pages of bouncing balls overleaf, and on page 50 you'll discover why ...TRAZ failed to Sizzle – and why it does now. Watch it: your bat just became invisible!

...TRAZ

Cascade, £9,95 cass, £14,95 disk, joystick with keys

Continuing the great Breakout tradition comes the latest offering from Cascade, ...TRAZ (the Transformable Arcade Zone).

Initially, three options are available from the title page: one and two-player modes, or entry into the construction set. Choosing either of the former options launches the participant into the game proper, which follows the task of escaping from ...TRAZ – an electronic prison – by breaking through each of the penitentiary's 64 cells.

Each cell is displayed fullscreen and contains neutron bricks, all of which are destroyed on contact with the ball to reveal possible exits. Cells often have more then one bat, which are directed via the joystick and operate at two speeds, dependent upon whether or not the fire button is depressed. In two-player mode control of the opposite bats frequently swaps at random.

Cells also include indestructible blocks and a number of other fundamental components such as traps, monster generators and refractive glass, which sends the ball off at a variable angles.

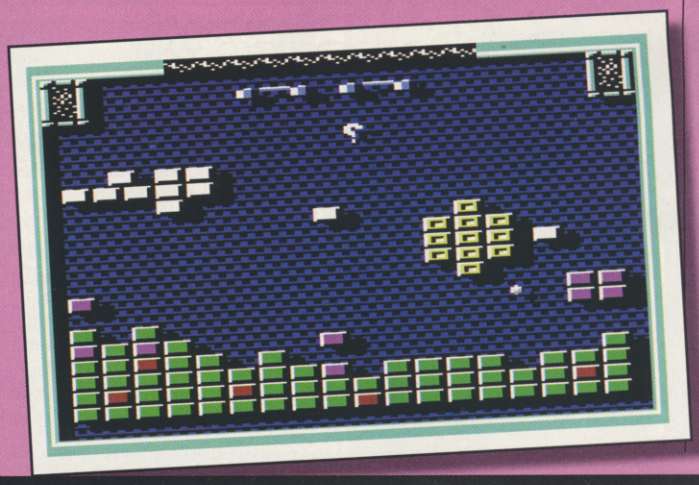
When a brick is destroyed, it sometimes releases a mystery power pill in the shape of a question mark, which has a predetermined effect on the ball or bricks. These include gravity affected balls, fast and slow balls, dividing balls, and lasers. Whenever a ball makes contact with the electronic 'goal', a life is lost – from both players in two-player mode.

A map of ...TRAZ can be accessed at any time to display the cells already visited and the current location. Once all 64 levels are breached, a gap appears in the outer perimeter and freedom is attained.

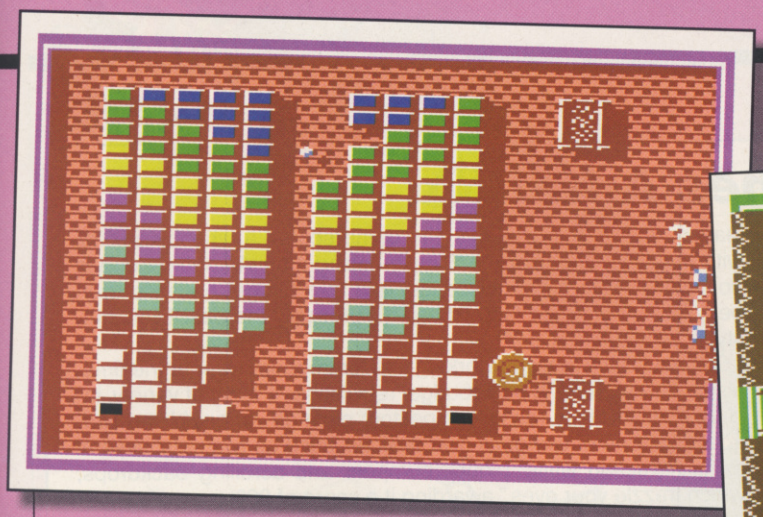
The program also supports a construction set which allows all the parameters of the game to be altered or an entirely new, 64 cell prison to be created.

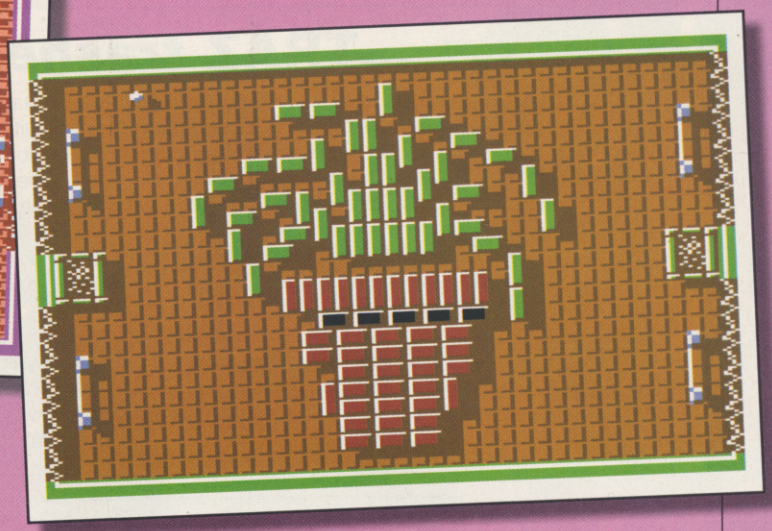
The saying that the simplest ideas are often the best definitely applies to the Breakout genre, and *...TRAZ* is further proof of this. Graphically, it's great: fast, bright and colourful, varying from psychedelic to downright gaudy. Movement on the ball is smooth, and when there are several on screen at one time you'll need more than a pair of eyes to keep track! A nice touch is the random element which allows any of the 64 screens to appear at the start of play, making each game that little bit different. I enjoyed playing this game, but it's not perfect: there are one or two niggling faults, such as odd deflections from the edges of the bats, the overall difficulty of some screens (completing all 64 cells poses rather an immense task), and annoying dependence on luck to remove the last few blocks. Still, *...TRAZ* is fun, and has a brilliant screen editor to fiddle with when you get bored.

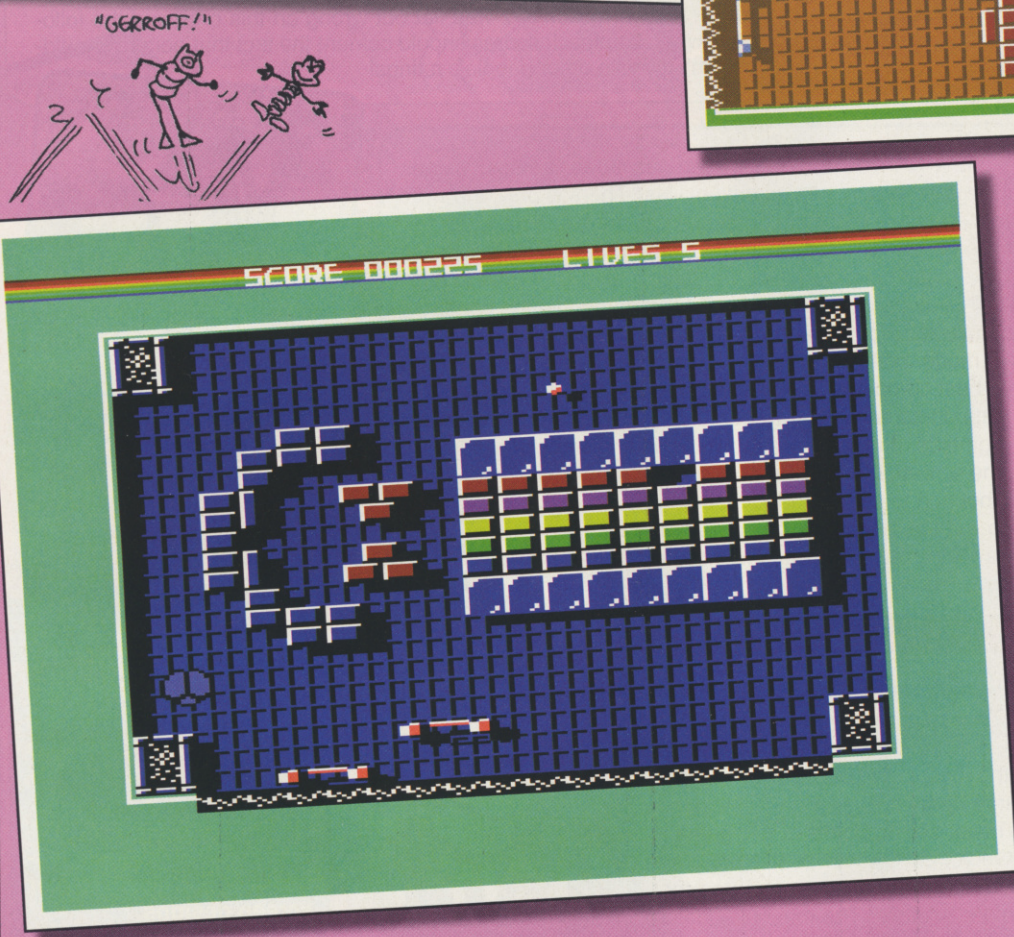
This is the most addictive game I've played for ages. It requires an almost schizophrenic mental agility when you're trying to defend four 'goals' at the same time, especially if there are nine balls on screen! The extra features such as refractive glass and mystery pills are brilliant, and the action can become unbelievably hectic as your reflexes are stretched to the limit. The presentation is similarly excellent, having some very clever and imaginative screen designs, all of which are frustratingly compulsive. Graphically, *...TRAZ* is very good: large, bright and extremely colourful backdrops with well animated (if simplistic) sprites. The sound is unusually inventive for a game of this type, with a strong title tune and decent in-game effects. The package also contains the definitive Breakout construction set. *...TRAZ* is more than just a customized clone; it's a superb game in it's own right.



"For instance, when Eugene Lacey sees that fool Lloyd Mangram in the street does he shoot him or just say a friendly "hello"?"
A confused Commodore User reader







Since ...*TRAZ* came into the office, Zzap! Towers has been resounding to 'oohs' and 'ahs' as members of the team struggle away in two-player mode. Some would say that any Breakout variants coming out now have missed the boat. Well, if ...*TRAZ* were a closer copy of the *Arkanoid* style then I would have to agree, but as it stands, it definitely has sufficient innovation to make it worthwhile. Frantically juggling nine balls with two horizontal bats and two vertical bats is a real laugh – even more so when you collect a question mark and the balls become invincible, begin spiralling or zip off at MACH 4. The variety and imagination that has gone into designing the screens, coupled with the idea of putting all the levels together to make a maze gives an extra urge to progress. On top of all this is one of the most comprehensive screen editors you'll ever see, making ...*TRAZ* something worth getting your hands on.

PRESENTATION 93%
Adequate instructions and options, excellent screen display and fully comprehensive construction kit.

GRAPHICS 81%
Well-designed screens and convincing ball movement, reasonably bright and colourful.

SOUND 60%
Slightly annoying title tune, but unusually good in-game effects.

HOOKABILITY 91%
The combination of devious Breakout format and individual customisations proves instantly addictive.

LASTABILITY 86%
64 levels of compulsive and often frantic action with a screen designer for rainy days.

OVERALL 87%
A revivifying enhancement of a tired theme, and a compelling game in its own right.

"Or when Mike Pattenden sees that other fool Gary Penn, does he push him under a ten ton lorry or offer him a free subscription to Commodore User? (How could he refuse that?)"
A confused Commodore User reader rambles on...

SIZZLER

...TRAZ *trashes* Arkanoid

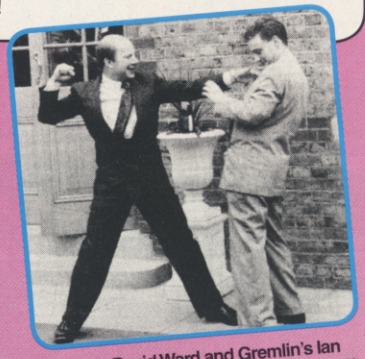
It's certainly interesting to read what Gordon Houghton, one of the original reviewers of *...TRAZ*, said in a recent interview published in Retro Gamer: "I remember Paul (Glancey) and I really liked *Arkanoid*, and wanted to give it a Sizzler, but Jaz (Rignall) flatly refused, and that was the end of it."

Of course, as true Zzap! afficionados will know, Gordon was talking about *...TRAZ*, not *Arkanoid*. Ocean's game got reviewed in Zzap!64 issue 24 (April 1987) – a year before Gordon and Paul started working for Newsfield. This explains why *...TRAZ* missed Sizzler status (and by just 3%), and it's telling that Zzap! always had trouble scoring Breakout-style games (see also: Krakout versus Arkanoid).

Just six months later, *...TRAZ* was surprisingly re-released. In Zzap!64 issue 43, the game scored a whopping 93%, with Maff Evans declaring: "Simply calling it an *Arkanoid* clone is doing *...TRAZ* a great disservice, and at a budget price it's even better than before. In fact, I'd say it's probably the best Breakout-style game on the C64."

Steve Jarratt, who was working for Commodore User at the time, also raved about *...TRAZ*'s budget re-release: "Plenty of variety, including all the features of competitors such as *Arkanoid* and *Krakout*, plus one or two of its own devices, such as two bats, several exits, retracting walls, pinball bumpers and scrolling backdrops, which frazzle your eyes," awarding it a score of 90%.

So, we reckon Jaz was flat out wrong on this one, and the following Zzap!back scores should cement the fact that editors shouldn't toy with other people's ratings!



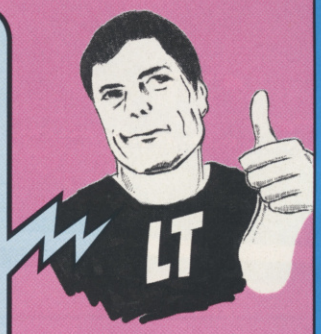
• Ocean's David Ward and Gremlin's Ian Stewart having a breakout over Zzap!64's Arkanoid and Krakout reviews.

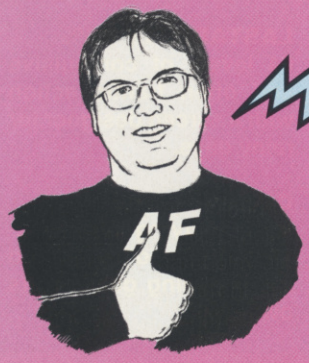
TRAZ might have arrived late at the party as far as Breakout clones go, but maybe the best was saved until last. There is only one word to truly describe playing the game: manic. With the ball able to be lost from anywhere on screen (not just the bottom), bats flying all over the place, and balls travelling at MACH 3, you need four sets of eyes to keep track of it all. That alone would make for a good game, but the construction kit element, enabling you to design your own levels, and the wonderful two-player mode, both add greater longevity. Indeed, *...TRAZ* serves up one of the best co-operative modes ever devised: both players get to control the bats on-screen and they can change ownership at the most random of moments. If a game makes you swear as much at the other player as at the screen, then you know you're on to a winner. There is the odd random bounce to account for, and it can be a pain trying to get the last bricks on some screens, but these are minor niggles in what is the de-facto brick-bashing game on the C64.

OVERALL 90%

Imagine if *Arkanoid* was given a fashion makeover and still retained its playability: you'd get *...TRAZ!* It might have been overlooked by many when originally released, but *...TRAZ* is a deluxe package, with plenty of features to impress the most jaded of Breakout players. Each screen is varied and the game creates a genuine enthusiasm in you to keep playing. One of the major selling points of this game is the construction kit, which works very well. Of course, the two-player games are where the fun really begins, and I can guarantee that there will be laughter and tears before bedtime! The main plus point, though, is the gameplay: it's so addictive, which is why *...TRAZ* is a game that I come back to quite often. Overall, *...TRAZ* is possibly the best Breakout game for the C64.

OVERALL 93%





Cascade's *Arkanoid* clone *...TRAZ*, or Transformable Arcade Zone, is well presented, with a nice title tune and sound effects, plus some simple but effective graphics (despite some garish colour combinations). There are, however, two minor flaws: the random nature of the question marks can make completing a screen too difficult; and while the random start screen adds variety, all too often you find yourself stuck in the same part of the maze on a difficult screen. The construction set adds lasting appeal, and overall this is a great example of the genre.

OVERALL 90%

ZZAP! BACK

PRESENTATION 94%
Good options, concise display and easy-to-use construction kit.

GRAPHICS 79%
Colourful bricks and identifiable hazards. Clever screen designs.

SOUND 75%
Chunky SID music along with wacky sound effects throughout the game.

HOOKABILITY 90%
Simple to play, very hard to put down.

LASTABILITY 91%
Tricky enough to withstand repeated play, plus the ability to build your own screens.

OVERALL 91%
Breakout on steroids.

"We don't see a lot of the Zzap! team, but we know they're avid readers of CU, how else would they stay in touch?"
Eugene Lacey, Commodore User

Artwork scan provided by Stefan Lindberg

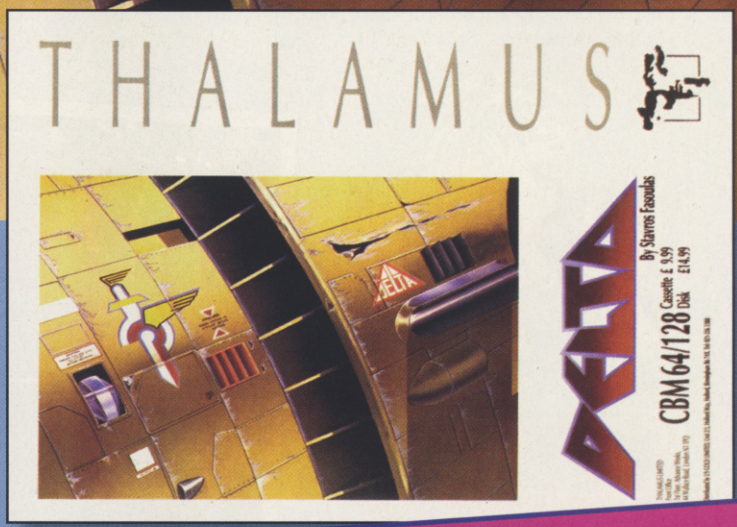
DELTA

The combined talents of Stavros Fasoulas, Bob Stevenson and Rob Hubbard ensured that the second Thalamus release, Delta, received much acclaim in early 1987. Commodore User and C+VG offered ratings of 9 or 10 out of 10, but, surprisingly, Zzap! was less impressed, suggesting the game was worth a mere 74%.

This soon became one of the magazine's most controversial decisions, eclipsing its earlier slating of Mama Llama. Not that the game's programmer, Fasoulas, cared, although he had plenty to say about Thalamus and royalties – mostly the fact that the concept of royalties seemed to be rather alien to Thalamus.

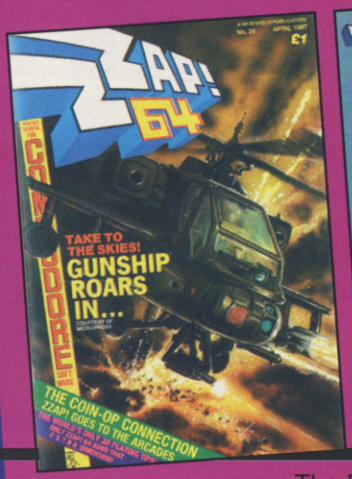
Delta provided some other surprises, too. While most Thalamus releases had Oliver Frey's wonderful artwork adorning their covers, Thalamus instead chose David John Rowe to create the art for its follow-up to Sanxion.

The final piece was hardly earth-shattering, lacking the texture of Frey's airbrushed art. Strangely, it appears that only a fraction of the image was used – the full artwork is shown at the top of this page. Perhaps the powers-that-be decided that the jet engine (hardly a feature of most spacecraft) didn't make the grade, thereby causing Thalamus to crop the art accordingly. Some have even suggested that the image wasn't totally complete, hence the edit. In fact, Rowe himself said in 1988: "You always ask yourself what pictures would have been like if you had done this differently or that had been altered. Usually, though, the deadline decides it for you." <<



ZZAP! BACK

We now shoot back to April 1987 and Zzap!64's 24th issue, in order to present a reworking of the original Delta review. On page 54 we will give Delta *another* look. Will everybody finally agree?



"That Floyd-like backing track for Delta by Jabba the Hubbard was awesome!"
Martin Walker

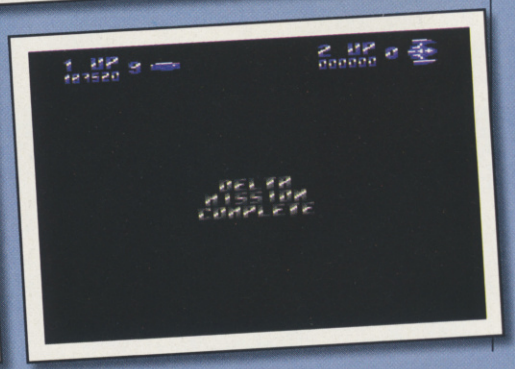
DELTA

Thalamus, £ 9,95 cass, £ 14,95, joystick

Deep in an area of uncharted space lies a strange alien region known only as 'Delta'. Several ships belonging to the Terran Merchant Fleet have gone missing while flying through this mysterious area, and it has been rumoured that the Hsiffan Khanate, dreaded opponents of Terra, are operating from within its confines. The powers that be have decided to send a fighter pilot to investigate, and, bored with your current position, you decide to voluteer.

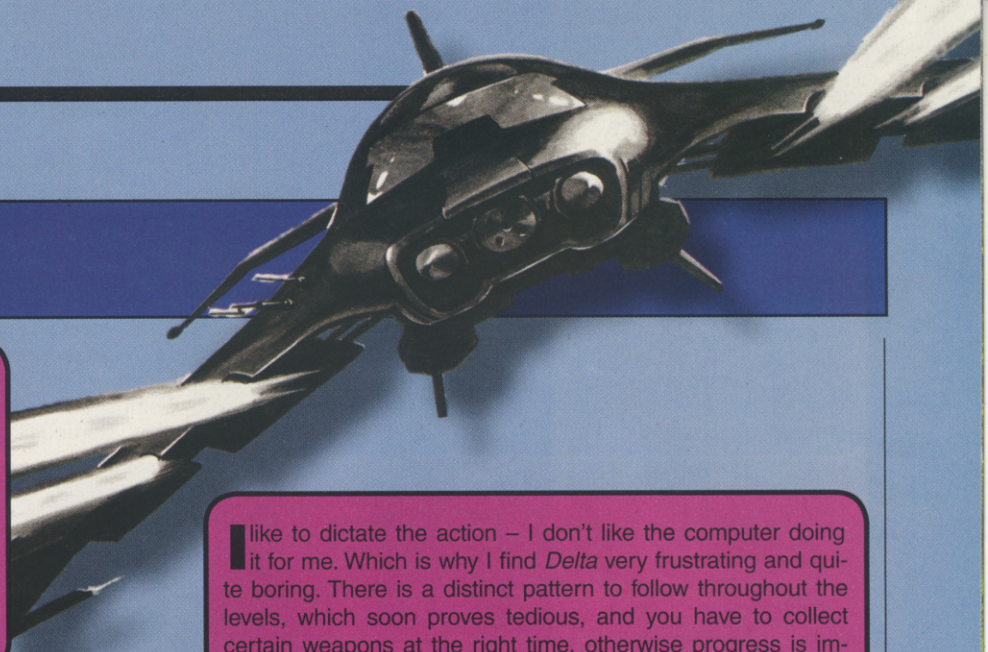
Dropped off within range of Delta, your objective is to progress as far as possible through the region and erradicate the Hsiffite menace. Following an initial onslaught of alien ships, individually named sections of the region are encountered. These include particular hazards, which appear at the top and bottom of the screen and correspond to an area's name – for example, in the 'Rocks of Death' section, suitably desolate rock formations scroll past. In all cases, contact with the landscape destroys your ship. Learning and memorising the alien formations is necessary to ensure progress, and complete destruction of attack waves earns credits. These are used to accumulate additional equipment, increasing the ship's firepower, speed and shields. Seven icons periodically make

Delta is very impressive. The graphics are superlative, the effects are stunning and the music is nothing short of amazing. Delta's most impressive feature though, is the enormous amount of objects whizzing around the screen... bullets, rocks, enemy craft and swirling aliens – the action gets incredibly busy, and you really need the extra weaponry to survive. The thirty-two levels are varied, and there are some really neat ideas to surprise and thwart the player. If you're into shoot 'em ups, take a look at this – you can't get much better within the horizontally scrolling format.



"Delta is one of the most refined and stylish games Rob Hubbard ever worked on. It looks fantastic, plays superbly and sounds magnificent. The soundtrack is another Rob Hubbard epic which manages to generate an entrancing effect throughout the entire game, the result of which is an unforgettable musical experience."

www.robhubbard.co.uk



Delta is a very smart looking game. The graphics are really neat, with a great parallax starfield and some lovely aliens. The music is superb, especially the main track that runs throughout the game. The gameplay, however, is a little on the weak side – learning the attack formations is essential but more often than not monotonous. *Delta* offers sufficient blasting for your money, but may lose its appeal quite quickly due to the predictable gameplay.

their way across the screen, some grey, some blue – depending on how many credits you have amassed. Colliding with a blue icon adds the item in question to your ship and the icon reverts to a grey colour – hitting a grey icon results in the loss of a life. The added equipment has a limited useful life, so further additions are necessary as you progress. Battle your way through thirty-two levels, and Delta is once more safe from the alien threat. But the Hsiffites don't give up that easy, and return a decade later. Once again it's up to you, now an older and more experienced pilot, to deal with the alien attack force. You're not the only one to have gained experience though – the enemy have also had time to improve their fighting skills and are now a more formidable opponent.

I like to dictate the action – I don't like the computer doing it for me. Which is why I find *Delta* very frustrating and quite boring. There is a distinct pattern to follow throughout the levels, which soon proves tedious, and you have to collect certain weapons at the right time, otherwise progress is impossible – regardless of how skilful you are. If bi-directional or multi-directional scrolling had been incorporated it might have been a different story, but simply flying in a straight line, encountering a set pattern of opposition is not very appealing. Also – if the ship had a limited supply of ammunition, instead of the existing time limit, there would have been more skill involved as the player would have to be shot conscious. *Delta* is highly polished and mildly playable, but on the whole I enjoyed the mini mixing-desk loader more than the game itself.

PRESENTATION 97%
Innovative loading system and slick in-game presentation.

GRAPHICS 92%
Very effective parallax starfield , pretty sprites and landscapes, and varied alien movement patterns.

SOUND 97%
Excellent Rob Hubbard soundtrack and some good spot effects.

HOOKABILITY 79%
Easy to get into, but predictable after only a few plays.

LASTABILITY 63%
32 levels and roughly 200 attack patterns, but very little real variety.

VALUE 72%
There are cheaper shoot 'em ups, but few as polished.

OVERALL 74%
A high quality production which lacks substance.

DELTA: The final verdict?

Let's face it: right from the very start, *Delta* was a game that polarised its audience, gaining a cult of rabid followers and just as many stern sceptics. Gary Penn is the most well-known of the latter group, famously stopping *Delta* gaining Sizzler status in Zzap!, and then going on to award it a miserly 59% in Emap's Commodore Guide. During this re-review, he claimed *Delta* was an "astoundingly hard space shoot out for genuine masochists and experts only". Despite this, Ciaran Brennan and Julian Rignall proudly displayed *Delta* in their personal top tens, while back at Zzap!64, Gordon Houghton and Paul Glancey ranked *Delta* as the fifth best shoot 'em up for the C64 in November 1988's DEF Guide to shoot 'em ups. Despite this, Zzap!'s new-found love affair with the game was relatively short-lived. Zzap!'s 68th issue – two years later – saw *Delta* receive *again* 74% for the budget re-release, labelled a "quality if unoriginal product". Fast forward 15 years to Zzap!64 107's Zzap!back, courtesy of Paul Glancey and Robin Hogg, and the game is back in favour again: "I think this deserved borderline Sizzler status at least," enthused Paul; "Underrated to the max – this should have Sizzled", agreed Robin. And now, the story continues…

After *Sanxion*, I wondered what Fasoulas and Hubbard would come up with next, and I was not disappointed with the result. *Delta* is more a fantastic experience than a mere game. The shooting may be on rails, but how polished those rails are. From the moment the mix-e-load system appears when the game is loading, you know you're in for something special. Then you're hit with *Delta's* brilliant title track and an epic in-game theme, which bring to mind Phillip Glass and Pink Floyd respectively. The gameplay also stands up today. After all, many current shooters use a similar power-up system – miss one at your peril! Nonetheless, *Delta* remains a great game and only *Wizball* has more polish.

OVERALL 92%

The biggest problem with *Delta* is its difficulty level:shoot 'em ups should draw the player in gradually, but *Delta* is way too hard right from the start. It reminds me of *IO*, another shooter that looked amazing but was more difficult than climbing Mount Everest on laughing gas. I wasn't very impressed with the graphics – they are not colourful enough and there are too many shades of grey. I get the impression that *Delta* was a 'rush job', perhaps aiming to cash in on the *R-Type* and *Nemesis* boom of the time. If only Stavros had improved the graphics, tweaked the gameplay and sprinkled magic dust on this game (sorry – I'm getting carried away!), then it could have been outstanding. Sadly, *Delta* is just another shooter.

OVERALL 62%

Delta was glossy and drossy. Well, it wasn't quite that bad. It was a tight, accomplished piece of work, but play it now? I'd rather not. I can't remember why I dragged the average rating down to stop it being awarded a Sizzler. It was a lot better than *Sanxion*.

Following the success of *Sanxion*, great things were expected from Thalamus' second release. Sadly, these expectations weren't entirely met: *Delta*, as a game, is a strange beast. It is one thing to expect a player to be skilful at a game, and to suggest that learning attack patterns will increase the player's likelihood of success in a shoot 'em up. However, when you have to learn every single pattern in order to progress, and guess which power-up to choose at a particular moment (you have really no chance of survival if you go for the wrong one), that's something else entirely – and where the line is drawn. *Delta* looks and sounds terrific, but once you actually start playing, it is firmly on the side of boring. A missed opportunity.

OVERALL 68%

I'm a sucker for this type of game! Forget the original Zzap! review – *Delta* is a classic game! While *Sanxion* was an overrated pile of rubbish, *Delta* is a complete package that had a quality rarely seen in the 1980s. The graphics are vibrant and colourful. Rob Hubbard offers some of his best soundtracks here – who could not enjoy the Pink Floyd-inspired in-game tune? It matches perfectly with the game's meaty screens of mayhem, destruction and explosions. However, it's not entirely perfect: *Delta* becomes hard on later levels, which may put players off, and the loss of collected weapons is very frustrating indeed. Overall, though, *Delta* is a sensational well-crafted blast from the past!

OVERALL 93%

ZZAP! BACK

PRESENTATION 95%
Good screen layout, plus mix-e-load keeps you occupied while the game is loading.

GRAPHICS 85%
Colourful yet somewhat minimal. Dull enemy sprites.

SOUND 98%
Perhaps Rob Hubbard's best work to date.

HOOKABILITY 80%
Shooters don't take much effort to figure out how to play.

LASTABILITY 60%
The question is whether you actually want to keep playing or not.

OVERALL 79%
A decent shoot 'em up, but it could have been far more.

ZZAP! ON THE WEB

• **www.zzap64.co.uk**
Iain Black's excellent site was the one that started it all. It now includes all scans, a Zzap!back section that enables you to add your thoughts (and scores) to a selection of reviews, and a friendly forum where fans and ex-staff remember how much better everything was in the old days.

• **www.zzapback.com**
The personal domain of Mr. Zzapback and the home of The DEF Tribute to Zzap!64 and other nostalgic madness. Visit this site to check out the material that we simply couldn't squeeze into this special edition of your favourite magazine!

• **www.the-burrow.freeserve.co.uk**
This excellent, funny and informative website was created by ex-Zzap!64 editor and all-round zany person Gordon Houghton. We wish every ex-Zzap! editor had a website like this!

• **www.gb64.com/articles.php**
Demetrius Kiminas' ongoing project to convert Zzap!64 reviews into HTML format. He was one of the first guys who started scanning in Zzap!64. He also contributed to Zzap!64 issue 107, and wrote a huge article about Zzap!'s history.

• **www.gamestone.co.uk**
Oliver Frey's artwork adorned almost every issue of Zzap!, but even many of the scans online don't present it in its best possible light. This website aims to redress the balance, offering retouched Zzap! cover scans.

• **www.w2s.net/zzap**
Timo Newton-Syms celebrates issues 41 to 50, a.k.a. the Houghton/Hamza/Glancey/Evans/Mangram years. It offers lots of attention to that volatile team of wacked-out nutters, and the site is nicely designed, too.

• **www.rainemu.com/zzapraine**
The Zzap!Raine website hosts the Raine (emulation) magazine, which includes reviews of retro arcade games. It draws inspiration from Zzap!64 and is supported by the likes of Lee Bolton, Anthony Stiller and Paul E. Morrison, all of whom have contributed to this special.

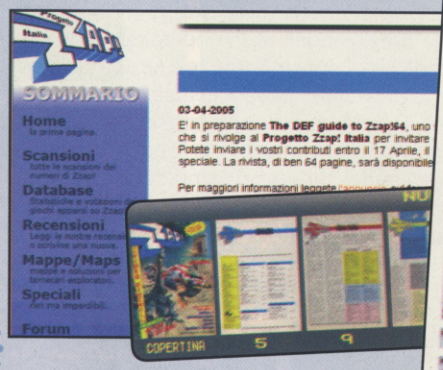
• **members.lycos.co.uk/duddyroar**
This neat tribute to Mean Machines magazine (Julian Rignall's baby) contains interviews with Gordon Houghton, Paul Glancey and others.

Further recommended surfing:
• www.crashonline.org.uk
• en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zzap_64
• en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thalamus_Ltd

Italian Zzap!

In 1986, Newsfield decided to translate Zzap!64 for the Italian market. The magazine was multi-format and had a slightly tacky layout, but it retained the humour and purpose of the British original. Its impact was such that it gained tribute websites of its own, and even an Italian version of Zzap!64 issue 107!

• **www.zzap.wide.it**
• **www.marcotodaro.com/zzap64.asp**



The Games Machine

Zzap!'s sister magazine The Games Machine also got an Italian translation. Eventually, the licence was sold off by Newsfield, and TGM is still running today, fast approaching its 200th issue!

• **www.tgmonline.it**

ZZAP! BACK MATCHDAY II

Zzap!64 issue 34, February 1988 introduced Ritman and Drummond's classic footie game, and it Sizzled! Here's the full review again. After that we have a kickabout over the ratings.

SIZZLER

MATCHDAY II

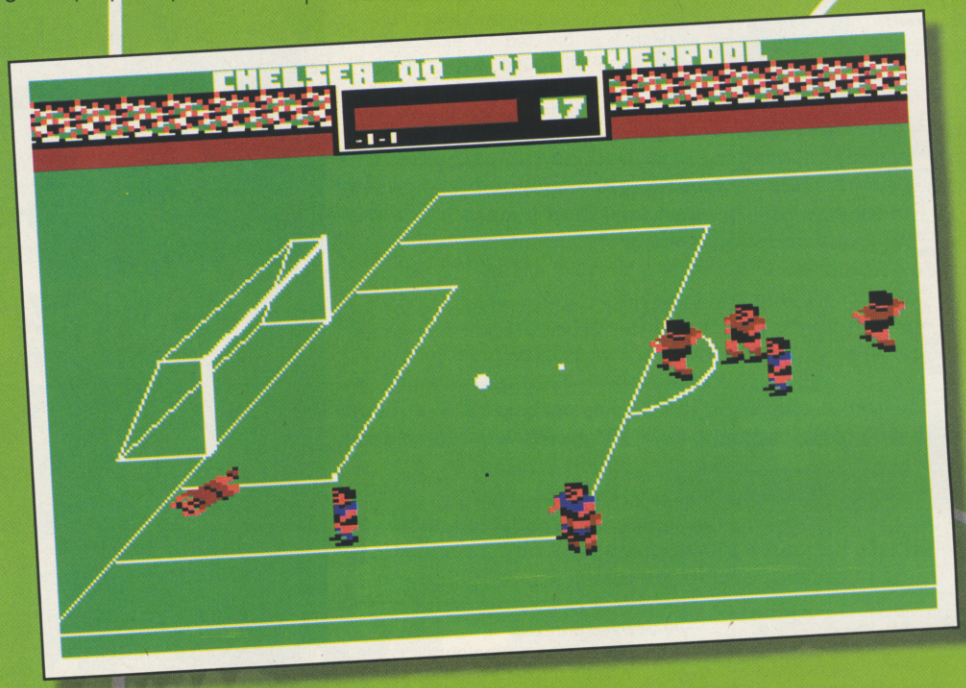
Ocean, £8,95 cass, joystick or keys

• **Brilliant footballing action in Ocean's sequel to** *Matchday*

Another footy game? "Can it possibly be better than good old *International Soccer*?" is the question on everyone's lips. Personally I think they're on a par. *Matchday II's* playability is hampered by the lack of speed during play, but the amazing series of options more than make up for this deficiency. The kickometer is a great idea and allows a skilled player to put together some really intricate moves. However, when all is said and done, I can only see this appealing to ardent football fans – it's just too much like football, and not enough like an arcade game – it's up to you to decide whether that's a good or bad thing.

The original Matchday was first released on the Spectrum, and was critically acclaimed as one of the best sports simulations of its time. The Commodore version, however, was very poor and only ever appeared on the They Sold a Million II compilation. Now authors Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond have collaborated again to design the successor, Matchday II, with John Darnell providing the 64 version.

One or two players participate in anything from a one-off match, to a full blown league or cup competition. Before kick-off, the player is given a series of menus allowing him to change virtually any aspect of the game to suit his needs. This starts with the option to compete against either a human or computer opponent, or even have two human players against the computer. The colour of the teams' strips and the pitch can also be changed, and handicapping introduced by giving one team the advantage of starting the match with a previously specified number of goals (or perhaps to simulate a two-leg game?).



For five long years, *International Soccer* has been regarded as the best football game available on the Commodore. Now things have changed – *Matchday II* has arrived. Its sheer depth is unbelievable. There are 17 screens of options, allowing nearly all of the game's parameters to be changed. Options include one or two player games and twin player mode – where both players play on the same team. There are league and cup competitions, with the league perfectly structured to challenge the player to the full. One of the real beauties is the way that players are selected to receive the ball – the computer always seems to select the right player. The control method is incredible, and allows a wide variety of kicks, passes, volleys, chips and backheels with the minimum of hassle, and all dead ball situations are fully controllable. The gameplay is very challenging – the lowest level is tricky, and beating the high level should take an awful lot of practice. The best thing of all is that *Matchday II* plays just like a game of football – which is surely the highest recommendation one can give.

Other factors that may be altered include attacking or defensive tactics for either team, the time played for each half, human or computer-controlled goalkeepers, and the volume of sound effects.

During the game, the player controls one man at a time, depending on which footballer is closest to the ball in play. Moving the ball around is achieved using a 'kickometer' – a constantly pulsing bar displayed at the top of the screen and above the currently controlled player's head. The strength of the kick is determined by the size of the bar when the fire button is pressed, even to the point of allowing the player to perform backheels when the meter displays a negative amount. The ball's direction is determined by the position of the joystick.

If a player has possession of the ball, he may either chip it, if he kicks while running, or pass along the ground if kicking when stationary. A player who doesn't have the ball may 'lock' his personal kickometer by keeping the button down. This means that when he next touches the ball, he will instantly volley it with the

HEE-HEE – GO-GO-JULIAN!'

"Matchday II is International Soccer with Terry Venables in charge. You get a set of players that look like overweight Maradonnas."
Matchday II review in Commodore User. Overall score: 5

strength displayed above his head. He may also head the ball with any strength he wishes by pressing the button when the player is below the airborne ball.

One player may affect the course of another by barging into him, forcing him to miss-kick. Fouls are not catered for, so overzealous challenges remain unpenalised.

The program supports throw-ins, corners and goal kicks (which provide a greatly increased kick strength for realistic range), and a realistic deflection system whereby the ball rebounds correctly from a player's body, dependent upon the direction and speed of both ball and footballer.

Hurrah! Two good football simulations in one month! This is a very accurate football simulation, more than a 'game', as it allows the players to perform most of the moves they could want, even down to backheels. Admittedly it's less spectacular than *Gary Lineker's*, but far more satisfying to play, as goals really do have to be built up. The twin player option is a superb idea too, taken from the likes of Kick-and-Run, and makes matches far more entertaining ('over 'ere, son, on me 'ed), as well as giving some variation from the old one-against-one style. The niggles about the game diminish as you play it, but are nevertheless annoying – the slowness of the players' movement, and the glitches which occasionally cause the ball to disappear. Some of the computer 'intelligence' also suffers from *International Soccer*-isms, with control sometimes not being handed over quick enough. These are insignificant though, when compared to the depth of the game, and the options available before and during play. It's too good to miss.

PRESENTATION 96%
An absolutely amazing array of options and superb use of joystick – the occasional glitches are annoying, though.

GRAPHICS 72%
Very effective, but slow.

SOUND 79%
Great title tune, and suitable sound effects.

HOOKABILITY 81%
As it IS football, the rules are pretty obvious, but some of the controls, especially the kickometer, are tricky to master.

LASTABILITY 92%
Three increasingly tough skill levels and the incredible options should keep a football fan happy in the months to come.

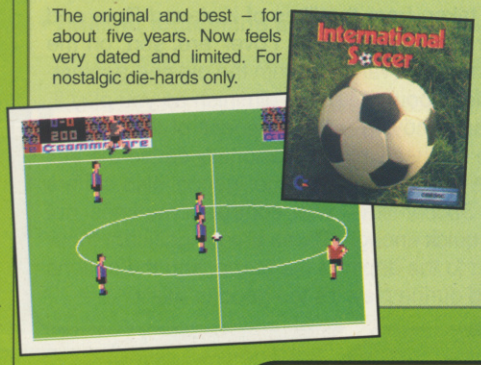
OVERALL 90%
Probably the most accurate football simulation to date, and despite some flaws, is a thoroughly enjoyable kickabout.

"The speed of the game means you're kept on your toes for the full 90 minutes"
Matchday II review in The Games Machine. Overall score: 90%

A match for Matchday II?

International Soccer
Released by Commodore in 1983 (cartridge)
Re-released by CRL in 1988 (tape/disk)
Reviewed in issue 39 (July 1988) **score: 86%**

The original and best – for about five years. Now feels very dated and limited. For nostalgic die-hards only.



Emlyn Hughes International Soccer
Released by Audiogenic
Reviewed in issue 43 (November 1988) **score: 90%**
Re-reviewed in issue 94 (CF, April 1993) **score: 58%**

A radical update of International Soccer, offering more depth, including leagues and limited management options. Still a good game.

Microprose Soccer
Released by Microprose
Reviewed in issue 46 (February 1989) **score: 90%**
Re-reviewed in issue 85 (June 1992) **score: 97%**

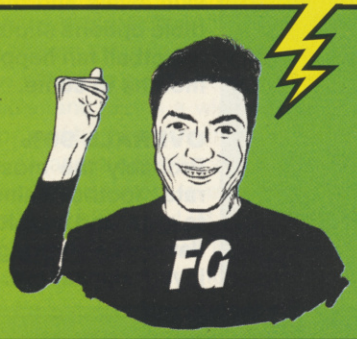
Frustrating and limited against computer opposition, but comes on to its own in two-player mode. Predecessor to the best football game to date: Sensible Soccer.

After demolishing Commodore's *International* 'walk the ball in' *Soccer* (beating level 9 by 14 goals to nil), I remember looking forward to finally playing a football game with a little more challenge. *Matchday II* was certainly not a disappointment in that area, and undoubtedly remains, for me, the best football game for the C64. The kickometer and diamond deflection system are what make the difference, and there are plenty of options, too, including one that enables two players to team up against the computer. *Matchday II* lasts: every year I return to it for a bout of European competitions, and it's still as much fun as ever. You might claim it's slow, but I reckon it's just strategic! Who needs the FIFA series when you can play this C64 classic? Superb stuff, indeed!

OVERALL 90%

Matchday II is not a game that grabs the player immediately: it is slow and the kickometer takes a while to grasp. But when you get familiar with the controls, it really shines. It is a sort of 'strategic' game: there is no fast and frantic action, and emphasis is placed on precision passes and the correct strength of kicks. But the wealth of available moves gives incredible realism to the action, making the game feel like 'real' football. *Matchday II* is not everyone's cup of tea: Paul Sumner said in the original review that "the game is too much like football and not enough like an arcade game". The budget re-release got only a measly 58%. But, in my opinion, it is a great game – even better than the likes of *Emlyn Hughes* and *Microprose Soccer*.

OVERALL 88%



I love football: I love playing it, I love watching it and I love talking about it. Unfortunately, it's suffered badly in many home translations, and, I'm sad to say, that's the case with *Matchday II*. As far as I'm concerned, this game is nothing like football. Watching squat, fat, crippled sprites slowly hobbling around the field in pursuit of a white balloon is not my idea of a fun footy match. Sure, the features are nice, especially the kickometer, but they're wasted when the game plays so interminably slowly that you could probably brew a cuppa in the time it takes to get from one end of the pitch to the other. In fact, I'd enjoy a cuppa a whole lot more. I can see why it was rated highly at the time, because it does offer more options that any prior football game, but they're bunged on the front-end of a horrible game. I didn't like it then and I hate it now. Play *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* instead.

OVERALL 50%

ZZAP! BACK

PRESENTATION 98%
As many options as you could ever possibly need.

GRAPHICS 50%
Fat, identikit sprites that hobble about as if they're off to collect their pensions. The pitch isn't bad, though.

SOUND 80%
Very nice tune, suitable spot effects, nifty whistles.

HOOKABILITY 65%
Football is always addictive, but some tricky controls and the lack of speed might put you off a little at first.

LASTABILITY 75%
If you're not frustrated by the sluggish gameplay, you'll be drawn in for many matches to come!

OVERALL76%
A real 'love it or hate it' game, but those willing to persevere will unearth a cracking footie game. Just look elsewhere for fast-paced action.

"In retrospect I think Matchday II was well overrated by the old Zzap! crew. It's difficult to understand how the game's snail pace and graphical glitches could have been so easily dismissed."
Matchday II budget release review in Zzap!64, August 1990, Overall score: 58%

Photo by Gilesgoat

MAMA LLAMA

We end this DEF Tribute to Zzap!64 by checking out the magazine's first major piece of controversy.

In early 1985, Zzap!64, in its infinite wisdom, invited Jeff Minter to contribute a page or two, which he used to rant about software piracy and distribution – things that were starting to impact on Llamasoft.

The magazine's launch issue also happened to review Minter's latest masterpiece, Mama Llama. However, the reviewers – Julian Rignall and Gary Penn (both Minter fanatics) and Bob Wade – unexpectedly crucified the game. Minter retaliated: he'd been sending out his Nature of the Beast newsletter to fans, and he included his thoughts on Zzap!, no doubt tarnished by the negative review: "The mag is okay, not brilliant, bit too much like Crash for me, reviews reading like they were written by 12 year olds for 12 year olds. Although they haven't sunk to Crash's depths of describing stuff as 'brill' yet".

Minter's column was dropped two issues later amid much animosity. Tellingly, two full-page adverts in Zzap!64's fourth issue boldly displayed the views of rival publications who'd taken a shine to Mama Llama.

The situation remained as such until Gary Liddon ("The company fool", according to Gary Penn) visited Minter to interview him for Zzap!64's 1985 Christmas Special. The interview, 'Slay it with flowers', included in-depth discussion about the Mama Llama incident, with Jeff complaining: "I still think it was very irresponsible for one magazine to have such a go at one person". On Gary Penn, Minter said: "That upset me. This guy, as far as I could tell, was well into my stuff… and then he really sticks the knife in with the rest of them".

After the interview, the relationship between Minter and Zzap! improved. In March 1986, Jeff was invited for a Superstar Challenge at Zzap! Towers, competing against the likes of Archer Maclean, Tony Crowther and Andrew Braybrook. Jeff won the competition, and he then returned to face the Zzap! crew, where he finished second to joystick juggler Julian Rignall, beating Gary Penn in the process. Notably, Mama Llama featured in both competitions, the Scorelord wryly commenting that this was a "rather touchy subject".

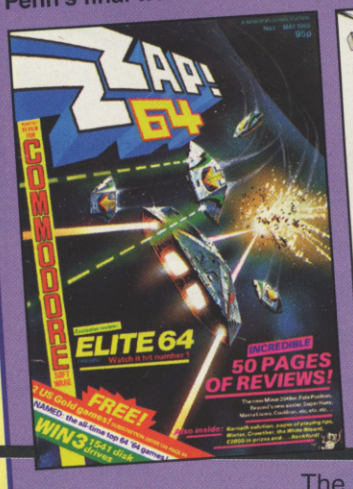
That same month, in Zzap!64 issue 13, exactly a year after the controversy started, Jeff regained his column in the magazine, and started his programming diary of Iridis Alpha, called 'The Daily Llama'. The diary's March 10, 1986 entry mentioned the following: "Drove to Ludlow for the second stage of the Zzap! Challenge. Played games all day, boozer in the evening, crashed the night on La Penn's floor. Ceremoniously burnt the review of Mama Llama with Penn's own lighter. (Next morning Gary Liddon woke to find himself covered in the ashes – Ed.)"

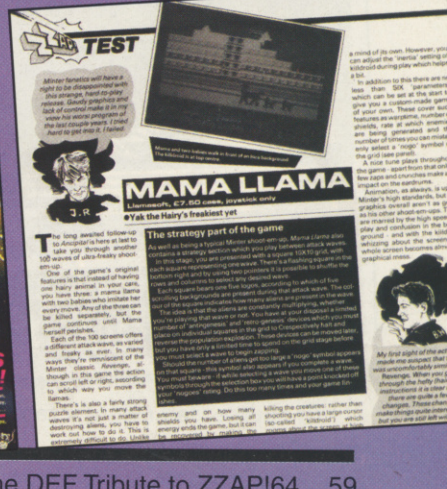
From then on, everybody lived Zzappily ever after!

Case closed!

Zzap!back with us to Zzap!64's very first issue, from May 1985, and read the original review. And then on page 62, the saga finally draws to a close, 20 years later, with Minter and Penn's final words on the matter!

ZZAP! BACK





"I think probably the *weirdest* Yakkie game would have to be Mama Llama. A little bit *too* weird perhaps..."
Jeff Minter, September 2003

MAMA LLAMA

Llamasoft £ 7,50 cass, joystick only

• Yak the Hairy's freakiest yet

The long-awaited follow-up to Ancipital is here at last to take you through another 100 waves of ultra-freaky shoot 'em up.

One of the game's original features is that instead of having one hairy animal in your care, you have three: a mama llama with two babies who imitate her every move. Any of the three can be killed separately, but the game continues until Mama herself perishes.

Each of the 100 screens offers a different attack wave, as varied and freaky as ever. In many ways they're reminiscent of the Minter classic Revenge, although in this game the action can scroll left or right, according to which way you move the llamas.

There is also a fairly strong puzzle element. In many attack waves it's not just a matter of destroying aliens, you have to work out how to do it. This is extremely difficult to do. Unlike Ancipital, there are no 'help' screens offered.

Being hit by an enemy will sap energy, depending on the enemy and on how many shields you have. Losing all energy ends the game, but it can be recovered by making the llamas sit down for a spell.

The backgrounds are more colourful than in previous Minter games, maybe TOO colourful: sharp flashes and lack of crispness make the game look coarse and gaudy. Gameplay is damaged by the confusing colour changes, and after playing for a few hours my eyes started aching.

Another aspect I found frustrating was the new approach to killing the creatures: rather than shooting, you have a large cursor (so-called 'killdroid') which zooms about the screen at high speed. To gain control over it, you press the fire button and then try to position it over an attacking object. This is very hard at first, and even after a lot of practice it still seemed to have a mind of its own. However, you can adjust the 'inertia' setting of the killdroid during play, which helps a bit.

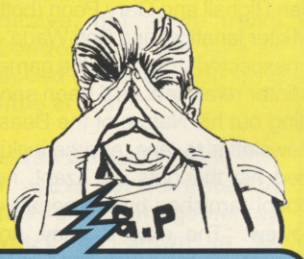
In addition to this, there are no less than SIX 'parameters' which can be set at the start to give you a custom-made game of your own. These cover such features as warptime, number of shields, rate at which enemies are being generated, and the number of times you can mistakenly select a 'nogo' symbol on the grid (see panel).

A nice tune plays throughout the game -- apart from that, only

• All that you touch, all that you see, all that you blast...

• Of course, Jeff meant 'Zzapstars'?

My first sight of the action made me suspect that this was uncomfortably similar to *Revenge*. When you get through the hefty (hairy?) instructions, it is clear that there are quite a few changes. These changes make things quite interesting, but you are still left with the feeling of having seen it all before. It's fast action as usual, although just a bit too fast at times, and it generally follows Minter's pattern of strange and hairy games.



Mama mia, what has Jeff Minter done? Simple. He's taken *Revenge*, altered the music, graphics, level select, and control method, and come up with an inferior product. Jeff loves to introduce new control methods into his games, but his latest idea – a hard to control hamburger, whoops droid – doesn't impress me at all. The lurid background colours and crude blocky graphics did nothing to enhance my enjoyment of the game. I loved *Ancipital* but can't recommend this one.

"Zzap! written by 12 year olds, for 12 year olds? That's why Jeff's always appearing in Zzap! then. Actually, Gary Penn was thirteen in July."
Commodore User

The strategy part of the game

As well as being a typical Minter shoot 'em up, Mama Llama also contains a strategy section which you play between attack waves.

In this stage, you are presented with a square 10x10 grid, with each square representing one wave. There's a flashing square in the bottom right, and by using two pointers it is possible to shuffle the rows and columns to select any desired wave. Each square bears one of five logos, according to which one of five scrolling backgrounds is present during the attack wave. The colour of the square indicates how many aliens are present in the wave. The idea is that the aliens are constantly multiplying, whether you're playing that wave or not.

You have at your disposal a limited number of 'anti-genesis' and 'retro-genesis' devices, which you must place on individual squares in the grid to respectively halt and reverse the population explosion. These devices can be moved later, but you have only a limited time to spend on the grid stage before you must select a wave to begin zapping. Should the number of aliens get too large, a 'nogo' symbol appears on that square – this symbol also appears if you complete a wave.

You must beware – if while selecting a wave you move one of these symbols through the selection box, you will have a point knocked off your 'nogoes' rating. Do this too many times and your game finishes.

Minter fanatics will have a right to be disappointed with this strange, hard-to-play release. Gaudy graphics and lack of control make it in my view his worst program of the last couple years. I tried hard to get into it. I failed.

a few zaps and crunches make any impact on the eardrums.

Animation, as always, is up to Minter's high standards, but the graphics overall aren't as good as his other shoot-em-ups. They are marred by the high speed of play and confusion in the background -- and with the killdroid whizzing about the screen, the whole screen becomes almost a graphical mess.

PRESENTATION 76%
Expansive, entertaining, but complicated instructions. Numerous options.

GRAPHICS 51%
Sorry Jeff, despite all the amazing creatures we think it looks horrible.

SOUND 63%
A pleasant tune, plus a few pings and zaps.

HOOKABILITY 49%
Even after several games there didn't seem too much addictiveness.

LASTABILITY 72%
If you like it, then there's almost endless challenge.

ORIGINALITY 62%
Despite plenty of new features, too similar to previous Minter games.

VALUE FOR MONEY 59%
Plenty there but we suspect even Minter fans may not take to it.

COMMODORE (AB)USER

If you thought Zzap!'s review of Mama Llama was harsh, wait until you hear what Commodore User's Mike Pattenden had to say about the game...

"*Mama Llama* is another comic shoot 'em up, which pretends to be very different, and very wacky, but is plain boring. You're supposed to spirit a mummy llama and her two sprogs while shooting holes in yaks and goats and other shaggy critters with your 'killdroid'. The action takes place on planet Led-Zepp IV (groan) and you have to gain more energy through reGenesis (howl), which you do by sitting down. This is how all ageing '60s rock fans renew their energy. The turgid bumph which comes with the game urges you to preserve your spatial awareness and apologises for the lack of a Genesis soundtrack. Well I didn't need one to cure my insomnia – I just put on the game, then I demonstrated my spatial awareness on the cassette. I lobbed it in the bin. Llamasoft fans will love it!"

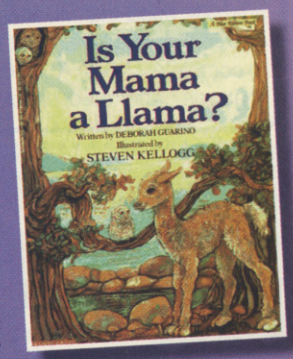
Presentation 2/5
Skill level 3/5
Interest 1/5
Value for money 2/5

Jeff's response in the fifth edition of his Nature of the Beast newsletter:

"Oh yeah, Mama's really stirring it up among the reviewers. Mama Llama is well wacky and quite difficult to learn, introduces several new gameplay elements and is (I think) my best game yet... My prize for 'Wally Review of the Month' must surely go to Commodore User. Their reviewer mentioned virtually nothing of the game's actual mechanics, and the entire basis for his criticism seemed to be that he didn't agree with my tastes in music... (write what you like, chum, but if you don't like Led Zep and Genesis then whatever it is I hate it!). Controversy, it's marvellous, but at least I'm doing something different enough to shake 'em a little bit."

Mike Pattenden, dishonoured, decided to have the last word in his monthly CU feature, Hot Shots:

"I won my first accolade. I'm proud to say, Jeff Minter has made me wally of the month in his wacky newsletter 'The Nature of the Beast' because I slagged off his *Mama Llama* game. Apparently if Jeff had his way, reviewers wouldn't really be allowed to express an opinion, especially when it came to reviewing his stuff because it's so far advanced (like psychedelic rock, apparently). Well, all I can say is I have to recommend games that cost up to a tenner and I don't really feel I can recommend something that is an utter piece of self indulgence on the part of the programmer. I don't think I'm alone in thinking that Jeff has strayed away from doing what he's best at..."



• **Inspirational...**

"Opinions are for swapping with your mates, not for publishing them as buy-directives in magazines."
Jeff Minter

"THANK YOU, PENN"

Yak@yakyak

Yeah. Mama Llama was a good enough game. Sure, it was unconventional and tough, but I stand by it. As true today as it was then is the fact that I'm not about to be bullied into doing things that are less interesting to me just because some people cavil about how it's a bit different from other stuff out there! Experimentation with new stuff is good!

And I stand by what I said: Mama Llama was a good game, although admittedly a bit difficult. Nonetheless, I stand by my right to attempt it. One of the main objectives was to try to get away from the homogeneity that even then was beginning to affect games (and is now a million times worse). I don't think I can or should be kicked in the bollocks for that. There was actually some cool stuff in the design of the game, too, even if you didn't like the experimental mechanic: breaking up the linearity of the game by having the scrollable level matrix; having a universal difficulty that increased across the whole set of levels as you played (and which you could retard at will on levels you chose by use of the anti-genesis devices)... I was genuinely attempting to advance game design in what I considered relevant ways.

All my games are self-indulgencies! Everything I've made, I made because I really wanted them. And, in a way, I think that's why I'm still doing it now. And this is a 'bad' thing?

Jeff Minter

Penn-o-vision

There's probably an element of truth to Jeff's protestations – there was inevitably some mutual influence on each other – but Mama Llama was too far up his arse for comfort and it wasn't a pain I was prepared to endure. Jeff seemed to believe that devotion for the art meant absolute devotion to the artist, but as much as I was a fan of much of his work, he wasn't beyond reproach (Andes Attack, anyone?).

The extreme controls made Mama Llama so inaccessible to all but the hardest of hardcore players prepared to persevere. The game may well be entertaining but it's not exactly easy to find out with the challenging player toy – well, how it was controlled... No thanks. It's like trying to hold on to an oily cat with a cactus up its arse. We should have made more of our falling out though – played up the whole 'traitor' thing in print. That would have been a hoot. But I took myself so seriously at the time (Liddon played the company fool). I used to get stick from Jeff's acolytes but I was too arrogant to care – I just enjoyed the attention.

This industry could do with more people like Jeff though. He did it for the love of the game – occasionally for the cachet but never the cash.

Gary Penn

How off-putting can a game's manual possible be? I just want to play a game, and not be bothered by all kinds of psychedelic nonsense! While *Mama Llama* is certainly different and original in many ways, I failed to get into it at all, and after 20 years I give up.

OVERALL 50%

I wouldn't exactly say that this was underrated at the time, because there's no way I, or anybody else, could recommend this game to everyone. It's simply not a game that will appeal to all. However, if you're up for a stiff challenge and have some spare time on your hands, *Mama Llama* could be just the girl for you.

OVERALL 71%

Jeff Minter tried something different with *Mama Llama*, and it's easy to see why some people give up after a few minutes. The inertia of the Killdroid takes some getting used to, and the grid is confusing. Play on an easy setting, complete a few levels and there will be a moment when it all makes sense. So, let's do the Minter checklist! Psychedelic colours: check! Fluffy animals attacking viciously: check! Hardcore blasting action: check! Devious levels that need a bit of thought to complete: check! A 1980s blasting experience that was underrated: check!

OVERALL 85%

ZZAP! BACK

PRESENTATION 79%
All the details and options you'd expect.

GRAPHICS 69%
Lots of colourful sprites, but perhaps a bit too busy.

SOUND 65%
A mediocre tune plays throughout the game, but the spot effects are good.

HOOKABILITY 50%
Extremely difficult at first.

LASTABILITY 75%
A massive challenge if you're prepared to stick with it.

OVERALL 69%
Make no mistake: this game sorts the rams from the lambs!

Thanks to Jeff Minter, we all still feel like "12 year olds"...

...even if most of us are pushing 30, 40, or beyond! An even *bigger* thank-you goes to all those fine folk who worked their socks off to make Zzap!64 the magnificent magazine it was – and, indeed, still is! (After all, have you ever heard of the DEF Tribute to Commodore User?) The list is far too long to print here, so: you know who you are, and we salute you all!

'BYE...'

"We simply can't work out how to improve Zzap!64. So we're closing it."
Anouncement in Zzap!64 issue 90

THE FANTASY ART OF OLIVER FREY

ROGER KEAN

THALAMUS PUBLISHING

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Beautifully reproduced originals

Swiss-born **Oliver Frey** is one of the most important artists working in the medium of commercial illustration. This lavish book documents his work between 1970 and today. The prime focus is on his staggering output in the 1980s and early 1990s when, as a director of the magazine publishing company Newsfield Ltd., he produced many magazine covers, software games inlays and incidental illustrations that set the video games market alight internationally.

Frey's early history reveals his work on some of Britain's greatest comic institutions such as the Fleetway War Picture Library, Dan Dare in Eagle, and The Trigan Empire in Look & Learn, as well as his celebrated 1930s-style opening sequence for the film Superman, The Movie. The book also throws light on Frey's techniques, from line and wash to the airbrush, and more recently his computer generated work.

While the paintings will be familiar to many magazine readers, few will have ever seen the originals as beautifully reproduced as this, and free of the commercial sales lines and slogans that cluttered them as magazine covers.

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- ***Commentary on the paintings by the artist.***
- ***Art techniques revealed and discussed.***
- ***Internet web connections to sites dicussing the work of Oliver Frey.***

Film-maker and author **Roger Kean**, who has known Frey for more than 30 years, was his collaborator in the founding of Newfield's famous stable of computer games magazines. He is currently engaged in editing illustrated historical reference books and in writing a book about the lives of the Roman Emperors. Kean lives in Ludlow, Shropshire.

Release: Spring 2006

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